From Literature to Culture

Selected Writings on Nepalese Studies, 1980-2010

Kamal P. Malla

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'These fragments I have shored against my ruins.'

Kamal P. Malla

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A Prefatory Note

This is a selection of my writings written and published mainly between 1980 and 2010. When Deepak Thapa of Social Science Baha assembled the volume, as a discerning reader he decided to include a few earlier essays as well, such as one on the Nepalese intellectuals (1970) and next on Linguistic Studies in Nepal (1974), evidently to make the book 'representative' of me and my professional background. However, of the 34 pieces collected here fewer than a dozen may have to do with my formal training, or with the profession I chose. Why my written work deviated and drifted so far away from my academic training may need some explanation.

As a student at Tri-Chandra College (1953-57), I aspired to study History, if not Economics. After attending History classes for a week in early August 1953, I dropped out in despair at the dull and uninspiring lectures, particularly on world history. My academic focus then shifted to Economics, particularly elements of economic structure and thought. Just as the History classes were lifeless compared to what I had expected or already read in V. Gordon Childe. I found lectures in Economics anemic compared to Marx's *Wage, Price, and Profit*. After graduating as a top student in Economics from my group, the Government, however, nominated me to study English instead. Nepal was then in an acute need of lecturers in English. The few noted ones were picked up by the Government, or the Palace, or left Nepal to join the new Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi.

To begin with, I took English Studies seriously at least till the end of

the 1960s. I may very well be among the exceptional few in Nepal to write as well as to publish any volume of critical essays. In 1967, I published *Fugitive Essays*, a collection of 20 essays on English literature. With a poorly funded university library and drastically limited resources available in Kathmandu I found English Studies a field with dismal prospects, if any, to do some research. Since the late 1960s I began to drift away from my field like a wayward calf, sniffing at other's pastures.

During my student days, the canon of English Studies was defined by the critical practice of T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis and the tenor of theory was set by I.A. Richards, William Empson and the New Critics. By the end of the 1950s, Sartre, Camus and existentialism were fast taking over the literary establishment in academia by dethroning Freud and Marx. By the time I retired, both literary and linguistic studies were in ferment. Chomsky's Transformational-Generative Grammar (TG) had gone out of the scene, replaced by his own later theories, such as Government and Binding, Principles and Parameters. His were no longer the final words. French theories, post-colonial, postmodern and poststructuralists were coming in and out of the scene. The scene is, not unlike a supermarket over-stocked with seductive showcases, just waiting for *After Theory* (London: 2003) to take over, if one were to take Terry Eagleton's words seriously.

My contacts in 1968 with Dr Austin E. Hale of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and with Dr Alan Davies of Edinburgh University in September 1969 were milestones in my career. Both were instrumental in bringing me closer to Linguistics. Hale gave us an introductory course in Chomsky's TG in 1968, and Davies initiated most English lecturers to 'Applied Linguistics' relevant to English Language Teaching (ELT). Notwithstanding an early citation in the QED, defining 'literature' as 'a profane perversion of language' I was fast losing faith in teaching literature to students who had little control over commonplace language structure. I did not know any Linguistics before meeting them. However, by February 1974, I completed a PhD in stylistics, appreciated by my examiners as 'a work that shows critical intelligence of a high order'. The papers on language, linguistics and literature selected here are focused on this phase. The papers on education, the intellectuals and the manoeuvres for/against the Department of Linguistics might give some insight into the politics of knowledge in our milieu.

When a journalist asked Max Weber, 'What is your field of specialization?' he replied, 'I am not a donkey; and I have no field allotted to me to graze.' The writings in this book are freelance essays on areas which are not mine by training or profession. Their only legitimacy is that they interested me, and if what I wrote interests anyone I had not wasted my time. Specialists of pure academic breed may, however, ignore them as amateur, if they wish.

Visibly since 1980 I trespassed into areas which are not mine. I crossed the boundaries because they allured and interested me as human sciences. For anyone serious about language or literature all testimonies of man's mind or intellect are fascinating fields for exploration. For one thing, literature always leads you to something else, to Psychology, Sociology, if not hard-core History, at least, to the History of Ideas. In my career as an academic I was principally tempted by 'texts' by meaningful systems and structures, by symbolic systems, thus by diverse fields of human learning, from Archaeology and the Arts to Astronomy, from Prehistory to ethnic studies.

Since 1967, I took over the editorial role, first of *Tribhuvan University Journal, Occasional Papers in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, in 1978, and *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, in 1983-1990, and finally *Kailash*, in 1992-1996. As an editor one had to read, review, and edit a variety of papers in all fields of the Humanities. Slowly, one begins to develop interest and curiosity in areas which are not legitimately one's specialisation. Had I not been editing these journals I would not have written several of these papers. My contacts with Nepalese and western academics grew in density with the rise of the internet, and with a selected few working on the culture, history, language and the arts the volume expanded with time, and the variety of issues taken up ranged from obscure terms to esoteric territories With a few such as Robert Levy, Siegfred Lienhard or Mary Slusser my mails continued for a long time.

For more than 20 years I was facilitating a translation project and two projects designed to compile dictionaries from old manuscripts in Newari. I owe my interest in Newar culture, language, and literature to poet Chittdhar Hridaya and Prem Bahadur Kamsakar, who taught me what my formal education had not. These overtures outside the narrow walls of the university helped me widen my network, interests and outlook.

Since 1974, I continued to teach both literature and linguistics. When

the Department of Linguistic was formally started in 1996, I taught there too till I retired in November 1999. However, the monotony of a teaching career compelled me to look out of my departmental window in Kirtipur. Just outside stood a mysterious mediaeval town perennially enticing with echoes and reverberations from the horror and heroism of its past. When I resigned as Rector in August 1979, I decided to study Nepal's history and culture. I read nearly everything I could get hold of. This new-found interest preoccupied me till this hour. In these scattered pieces of my writing I have looked back, and tried to find some design in the course of past events. They are each a 'personal interpretation'. In the literal sense of the term, like Prince Acqitaine in Gerard de Nerval's enigmatic sonnet 'The Dispossessed', one feels like pointing at this work like a ruined tower and say,

> These fragments I have shored against my ruins*

At 76, no longer in a proper physical form, one feels like John Updike's 'The Writer in Winter', lost in the satisfaction at a shelf of his works behind him, irrationally hoping that 'they will someday be read by someone'. While writing most of these I seemed to have found myself, reclaimed from formal qualifications I accumulated. They have helped me to understand my roots, social, cultural and intellectual. As these writings are from over three decades, any semblance of unity of purpose or approach must be accidental because I did not begin with any readymade ideas, much less with an ideological frame.

Among, leading western social scientists specialising on Nepal, particularly Robert Levy, Bernhard Koelver, Neils Gutchow, Siegfried Lienhard, Pratapaditya Pal, Eduard Seckler, Gerard Toffin and David Gellner have deeply influenced me. The seminal works of V. Gordon Childe, D.D. Kosambi and Michael Witzel have shaped my thinking on the past and approaches to piecing together fragments of text, culture, artefact and history. The works of Mahesh C. Regmi on economic history and those of Lain Singh Bangdel on art history were sources of my inspiration. Works by my colleagues in the university faculty, particu-

* 'The Writer's Winter' by John Updike reprinted in *The Best American Essays 2009* edited by Mary Oliver (Boston: Mariner Books. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), pp. 172-176.

larly the late Dhanavajra Vajracharya, Dor Bahadur Bista, Harka Gurung, Prayag Raj Sharma and Chaitanya Mishra, have been my regular reading.

For all the moral support and technical assistance my grateful thanks are due to Deepak Thapa and Kanak Dixit, who helped conceive the project, and the fine team at Social Science Baha and Himal Books, in particular, Rita Bhujel, Srishti Adhikari, Chiran Ghimire and the late Puspa Thapa, who generously stood by a dark horse, looking after a project which was very much their brain child. Early in January 2005 proofs of the book were handed over to me. Fiddling with the proofs, it has taken me six years to make up my mind. In the meantime, the tenor of public discourse and the postures in the academia were fast changing. The People's Movement, 1990, the People's War,1996-2006, and the Velvet Revolution, 2006 made me less than confident about the relevance of these writings until the Social Science Baha jointly gave a powerful knock at my door, reclaiming the project. But for this final push the book would not have been in print.

Kamal P. Malla
1 September, 2011

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1. 'The Intellectual in Nepalese Society', *Vasudha*, Vol 14, Nos 5 and 6, April-May 1970.
2. 'Linguistic Studies in Nepal', *Seminar Papers in Linguistics*, INAS, 1976.
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31. 'Some Recent Publications on Newar Culture and Identity', *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol 17, No 1, June 2011.
32. 'The Early Medieval Inscriptions of Nepāla-maṇḍala', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol 39, No. 1, January, 2012.

I

Language and Education

1

Linguistic Studies in Nepal

A surgeon attached to the British Residence in Kathmandu in the 1850s remarked: 'The subject of schools and colleges in Nepal may be treated as briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none.'[1] I believe the surgeon was not writing figuratively. This seminar is a testimony to the fact that linguists may be a rare species in Nepal, but they are, hopefully, not as rare as snakes in Ireland. At the same time, it is reassuring to know that in the foreseeable future Nepali linguists, though few and far between, are unlikely to face extinction.

When the Dean of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies requested me to give a paper on 'Linguists Studies in Nepal' I was at first embarrassed because there are several Nepali linguists who have been in the field longer than me. Soon it became clear to me that the Dean was actually looking for a sort of a salesman who could convince the investing agencies that linguistics is among the saleable goods in Nepal. It is, therefore, gratifying to note that one does fit into some responsible role in the promotion of linguistic studies in Nepal. What astonished me was that immediately after my return to Kathmandu in February last year, Dr Ronald Trail, ex-director of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, wanted to have an informal talk with me. In brief, Dr Trail was anxious to find out if I thought linguistics had any future in Nepal. In the last few months I have been able to gain some perspective on this question, but why Dr Trail was anxious as to the future of linguistics in Nepal, or,

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1 Wright, 1877, p. 31.

for that matter, why the Dean thinks that linguistics needs publicity drives is yet a bit of crystal-gazing for me.

Linguistics is one of the new social sciences taking root in Nepal. Even in the West, linguistics has just begun to enter the university syllabuses. In Britain, only a handful of universities teach linguistics. Edinburgh, an acknowledged centre of linguistic studies in Britain, started teaching linguistics at the undergraduate level in 1973. In India, out of some 90 universities only 16 teach linguistics at postgraduate level. Compared with other social sciences, linguistics as an academic discipline—particularly with modern structuralist and synchronic orientation—does not have a terribly long history. Apart from the United States and a few universities in the continental Europe, linguistics began to explode as an academic discipline only in the 1960s. Therefore, I do not see any reason why linguistics should not be allowed a survival test in Nepal.

Nepal has a tradition of language studies going back to the first scholarly native grammar of the Nepali language published in 1912. This native tradition of language studies has left its mark on modern cultural life of Nepal in general and literary and academic life in particular. I do not intend to present a historical survey of the work done within this tradition. But here it will certainly not be out of place to trace some of the basic orientations of this tradition of language-study in Nepal. There are two broad areas which interested the Nepali scholars consciously or unconsciously who worked within this tradition: (i) Codification of the language norms by writing dictionaries, grammar manuals of usage and orthography; and (ii) History of the language, mainly its origins, antiquity, extant texts and the relationship of the language with other cognate language. It is difficult to generalise as to the theoretical underpinning of this tradition except for the fact that the scholars working within this tradition were by and large aware of the 19th-century tradition of comparative philology in general and the work associated with the names of Brian Hodgson and the Linguistic Survey of India. The light of post-Saussuarean linguistics had not yet penetrated into the mainstream of this tradition, much less the theoretical rigour of the post-Bloomfieldian linguistics. There is remarkably little work on phonology of any Nepali language done within this tradition. This is understandably so because very little of what had been published on Nepalese languages by Nepal scholars is descriptive in orientation, drawing

upon first-hand field data. The Nepali languages which Nepali scholars investigated were mainly Nepali, Newari and a few other Tibeto-Burman languages. More often than not the corpora were not the spoken language but the literary dialect. Thus this tradition may be said to be very limited in its scope, methodology and perspective.

In fact, I am not quite sure if there was any Nepali who was formally trained, not in Old English nor in Comparative Philology, but in Linguistics proper till the late 1960s. In the 1950s and 1960s a few English teachers from Nepal went to Britain and the United States, and they were briefly exposed to linguistics with different degree of concentration. But their impact on linguistic studies as such has been negligible. It was in the Tribhuvan University Departments of Sanskrit, Nepali, Hindi and English that some rudimentary component of Philology and Comparative Philology was started at the Masters level. Initially, some of these courses were given by the Indian Colombo Plan teachers of English and Comparative Philology. Since the syllabuses for these courses are still available in the university archives one can assess the level of linguistic knowledge and technology the graduates must have gained from these Tribhuvan University courses. In the 50 marks philology component of Masters in Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi, and English the course objective was to acquaint the student with so-called phonetic laws, change of meaning, borrowings, and the history of the language etc. It will, therefore, be no exaggeration to say that linguistics proper had hardly taken any root within the university or outside it earlier than 1968-69.

It seems to me that the years 1968-69 are a landmark in the history of linguistic studies in Nepal. If by 'Linguistic Studies in Nepal' we mean 'linguistic studies' done in Nepal by the Nepalis (I was going to add 'for the Nepalis', but that would be unnecessary parody of Lincoln's definition of democracy), the year 1968-69 seems to have some special significance. It was in the autumn of 1968 that Tribhuvan University renewed the contract with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) from North Dakota University, under which Dr Austin Hale and his colleagues have been working on Nepali languages for the last eight years. The presence of the SIL linguists has played no small part in the stimulation of interest in linguistics, particularly in training our Nepali personnel in field technology and in updating our acquaintance with developments in linguistic theory. When the contract was signed it was

hoped that through regular seminars, workshops, fieldwork, in which for every SIL project there would be a Nepali associate from the university or elsewhere, Nepali linguists would be trained in due course so that they could take over from the SIL all the sophisticated and technical aspects of linguistic studies in Nepal. I chose the years 1968-69 as a landmark also because it was in September 1969 that the British Council recruited Professor of English, Dr Alan Davies, arrived in Kathmandu from Edinburgh to take over the Chair of English. One of the main purposes of handing over the Chair to the British professor was that he would train our Nepali teachers in the methodology of teaching English and other pedagogic problems of language teaching and expose our English teachers to linguistics aspects of language teaching. Dr Davies held three short-term courses for college teachers of English—with some five weeks of linguistics and applied linguistics. The courses were attended by some 100 lecturers in English from all over the kingdom. This was the first of its kind on any subject. Unfortunately, this has so far been also the last one with no follow-up. But the courses had stimulated considerable interest in linguistics as in the problems of language teaching. For several of us this was our first acquaintance with linguistics proper.

Compared with the situation in 1968-69, looking back over the last six years or so, one must say that there is considerable interest in linguistics in the central campus or elsewhere among both students and the faculty. As I mentioned earlier, the arrival of the SIL and the tenure of Dr Davies have both worked as catalytic agents in stimulating serious interest in linguistic studies. The presence of the SIL on the campus has made it impossible for anyone to take an amateur or dilettante interest in linguistics. The tenure of Dr Davies too had successfully driven home to English teachers the utmost relevance of linguistics to language teaching in general and English language teaching in particular. Those of us who are now teaching in the central campus of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, came to linguistics either through our contracts with the SIL or through our association with Dr Davies.

Having said all this, one must confess that the Nepali nucleus and component in the personnel taking up linguistic studies seriously is very weak—both numerically and professionally. As always there are Messrs Churamani Bandhu and Ballav Mani Dahal from the Department of Nepali, Dr Subhadra Subba from the Institute of Nepal and

Asian Studies, two or three Newari and Kirati experts, Mr T.R. Kansakar and presumably, myself from the Department of English. From other campuses a few names such as those of Balakrishna Pokharel and Taranath Sharma could be mentioned in this context. There may be one or two Nepali teachers and students on training overseas in Britain and the United States. This is about all those who comprise the task force of linguistic studies in Nepal. What dismays me is not the scanty number of Nepali linguists who may be said to have had some form of professional qualifications. What dismays me is, in fact, our failure to train more professional linguists hitherto, and this in spite of the fact that very distinguished SIL linguists such as Dr Hale have been in the field for nearly eight years.

The SIL has contributed a great deal in erecting an infra-structure of linguistic studies in Nepal—both materially and technologically. The SIL linguists have done excellent descriptive work on twenty-four Nepali languages—mainly phonemic summaries vocabulary lists, IBM computer concordance, and some studies on syntax. They have published a number of technical papers on Nepalese languages in learned journals in Nepal and abroad. Above all, by inviting a number of distinguished linguists such as Dr Pike and Dr Griems to the campus the SIL has given the local linguists an excellent opportunity to update their professional abilities. It will, therefore, not be an exaggeration to say that to fortify and reinforce our interest in linguistics, both technologically and materially, we need the SIL expertise.

Yet I for one believe that, SIL or no SIL, if linguistic studies are to be promoted in Nepal this can be done only by acquiring the technology by the Nepalese themselves. What I have so far failed to understand is that in spite of the SIL's presence in Nepal for the last eight years I do not see a single full-fledged linguist who could be said to have been trained by the SIL. This is somewhat incomprehensible to me because when our university signed the 1966 contract, and renewed it in 1968, I thought the SIL was going to associate as many Nepalese as possible in as many of their field-projects as possible. I do not know what happened since I was away for quite some time. Even the only PhD candidate who has been working under a SIL supervisor has not been able to complete his dissertation in the last six years.

In the SIL publications and projects I notice remarkably few Nepalis associated except as informants. We have offered the whole of our coun-

try as a single big laboratory at the services of the SIL linguists. If what we have received in return so far is an offset press or a few thousand yards of polythene pipe as payment in cash or kind for the informant service, I am not particularly ecstatic. If Nepali linguists are satisfied to stand by as informants for write-ups of technical papers on Nepali languages to be published in foreign journals, to which future Nepali linguists will need to refer to as authoritative work, I am sure posterity will not adore us. I, therefore, hope that both HMG and Tribhuvan University will look into the terms of the contract with SIL which has been recently extended. If we have not so far acquired any technology from the SIL we have acquired nothing from their presence for the last eight years. If we are to promote linguistic studies in Nepal we have to see to it that Nepali hands are trained before the SIL rolls up, so that the Nepali linguists could smoothly take over the excellent descriptive work started by the SIL on numerous languages of Nepal.

Before making any projection into the future and assessing various programming strategies for the development of linguistic studies in Nepal, I should like to say something and add a few more details to the picture I have so far painted. This might give us an additional perspective on the problems we are likely to face in the future. The details I wish to add pertain to four main areas of linguistic studies: (i) Teaching (as a part of regular university courses); (ii) Training (for the field workers); (iii) Research; and (iv) Publication. To take up teaching first, as a part of graduate programme, linguistics is taught in the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences in the Departments of English, Nepali, Sanskrit and Hindi. For example, out of a total 80 credit hour graduate programme, 16 credit hours of non-elective linguistics is taught, i.e., 4 credit hours in each semester. The first semester syllabus covers: Outline of the subject, Phonetics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, and Semantics. The second semester syllabus includes, Introduction to Applied Linguistics, Error Analysis, Language Testing, Syllabus Writing, and Varieties of English. The third semester syllabus concentrates on a diachronic study of the English language. Finally, in the fourth semester a detailed study of Contemporary English is taken up with the following course units: English Syntax and Theories of Syntax; English Phonology, Contrastive Linguistics, and Stylistics. The English syllabus may not, of course, be representative, but it gives some idea about the teaching of linguistics as a regular and formal course. Although linguistics is taught

by all the four language departments in the Institute of Humanities we do not as yet have a separate Department of Linguistics.

A training in linguistics for post-MA students has been recently completed for field workers who, it is hoped, will furnish the Nepali technical personnel for the proposed long-term linguistic survey of Nepal, about which I will have something to comment later on in this talk. The four students who have recently completed the first training programme held under the auspices of the Institute of Nepal and Asian studies were the graduates of English department. Thus, at present, we have a system under which training in linguistics is conducted by one institute and formal teaching in linguistics of a sort is conducted by another institute. Research and publication are closely interrelated activities. They may thus be briefly reviewed. The Tribhuvan University Library has a small collection of books on linguistics. The SIL Linguistics Centre too has a small collection of journals and books, mainly for reference use by its members. The British Library and the American Library too have some books on linguistics but none of these is adequate either for teaching or for training, much less for any acceptable research proposal. As I have already mentioned earlier, although there is a considerable amount of fieldwork and technical literature being published on Nepalese language, the contribution of the Nepali scholars in both research and publication seems to be minimal. The Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies Handbook mentions three or four projects which are being undertaken by the linguistic section of the Institute on its own: (i) it is preparing an introduction to the language section of the 1971 Census Report; (ii) A Sociolinguistic study of situational use of Nepali in the Maithili-speaking areas of the Sagarmatha Zone; (iii) The phonetics of Newari and Maithili, and a linguistic description of Magar under consideration for publication; and (iv) A Comprehensive glossary of the Jyapu-Newari Vocabulary, and a Nepali Technical Dictionary project to be started within the next five years. As for publication outlets, apart from a special Linguistics Number of the *Tribhuvan University Journal*, devoted to the papers of the SIL linguists, the university does not have any separate publication in linguistics so far on record. In the past seven or eight issues of the university journal and in the two issues of *Contribution to Nepalese Studies*, one can trace about half a dozen research papers on linguistics and Nepali languages. Among others, Churamani Bandhu's paper on 'Clause Patterns in Nepali', and the

papers on Newari by Thakur Lal Manandhar and Iswarananda Shresthacharya, written in collaboration with Dr Hale, seem remarkable in this context. Mr Churamani Bandhu of the Department of Nepali and Mr Tej Ratna Kansakar of the Department of English are working on their PhD dissertations, under the supervision of Dr Austin Hale.

I have devoted some time to the above details not because I am interested in the history of linguistic studies in Nepal, if there is such a thing, nor because I am interested in presenting a shabby picture of linguistic studies in Nepal. My interest lies in programming for the future and in devising feasible strategy for such programmes. The picture presented above clearly shows that linguistics in Nepal has been so far an ad hoc academic pursuit. In order to transform it into one of the main disciplines in the humanities, linguistics needs institutionalisation into the mainstream of the formal structure of university courses. Without the unbroken input of formal university courses in linguistics both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels it is highly unlikely that linguistics will gain any momentum in Nepal. The present dissociation of training for the fieldwork from teaching linguistics for a Masters degree in several departments will need to be integrated. The Institute of Humanities and the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies should conduct regular masters programme in linguistics with a co-ordinated curriculum of theory and discovery or elicitation procedures. Fieldwork under the National Development Service by linguistics students could in part be co-ordinated with the Linguistic Survey of Nepal project. For setting up a Department of Linguistics the resources of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, the language departments of Institute of Humanities and of the Summer Institute of Linguistics could easily be mobilised in the initial stages. Enrolment for the Masters programme in linguistics should be decided upon on the basis of the hands needed for the fieldwork for the linguistics survey of Nepal and for teaching linguistics in various campuses at the undergraduate level in the next three to four years.

In the context of the present decision making process in education in Nepal, it may take a great deal of salesmanship to promote the cause of linguistic studies. If some foreign agency or rich donors are willing to pour money into our linguistic research projects there is no harm even if we programme our research with a lavish orientation to the micro areas of the theory. But if we have to look up to the taxpayer in Nepal for financing linguistic research projects, I am afraid the Nepali taxpayer might not

be terribly keen about generative semantics or pre-lexical transformations. It seems to me that linguistic studies in Nepal, at the undergraduate and postgraduate stages, will need to have considerable macro and applied bias. It is not so much a matter of exclusion as of setting up a scale of priorities. Undoubtedly at the top of all priorities should go research projects which will explore the linguistic ramifications of the problem of literacy. The national literary rate in Nepal is 13 per cent. Out of the 75 districts 23 have below 9 per cent literacy rate. Even in a city like Kathmandu 68 per cent are illiterate. Since functional literacy is so much a linguistic problem, a number of projects should take up the problem both from the point of view of the child as well as that of the adult.

The second major area where the taxpayer would not, possibly, mind to pour some money into linguistic research is the communication media in general and the use of the national language in education and administration in particular. Yet another broad area which urgently needs the supporting evidence of systematic research is foreign language teaching. In developed countries like Japan teaching foreign languages has developed into a sophisticated technology with its own ramifications. The foreign language needs of Nepal and the unique problems which we seem to face need thorough investigation if we are to develop foreign language teaching activity into a factor in our national development. Finally, in some sense the single most important area where we seek insight from linguistic research is in the field of socio-cultural dynamics of our society. This can be done only by studying the unique linguistic configuration that is Nepal. In so far as language is an index to, or the code of, a speech-community's social psychology, value-system and inherited traditions—oral or codified, a thorough study of each new Nepalese language adds a new dimension to our insight into our socio-cultural dynamics. And such knowledge of Nepalese speech-communities is indispensable for mutual understanding and objective assessment of their role in the process of national integration—socially as well as psychologically.

It seems to me that the species of linguistics which is likely to flourish in Nepal is earth-bound linguistics, i.e., linguistics which is tied to our problems and needs. It is highly unlikely that at this stage we would be able to keep pace with the camp warfare going on among the linguists at MIT or elsewhere in the American universities. We need the tools of analysis and description and the whole range of insights which these

tools can make available for linguists working on Nepalese languages. But we cannot afford the luxury of supporting any research in linguistics if linguistics is to remain theoretically pollution-conscious and restrict itself to obscure model constructions. The teaching, training and research in linguistics in Nepal will need to have a strong applied and field bias—approaching language as a living socio-cultural reality rather than as a semiotic system of an algebraic species.

Nepal provides a wonderful laboratory for the field-oriented linguist, not only because it provides the linguist with a unique configuration of languages and language families, but also because Nepal provides the linguist with a comparatively virgin area for linguistic research. The state of our knowledge of Nepalese languages is not particularly sophisticated at present. Within a decade or two a number of minority languages of Nepal are likely to be extinct. Before this loss is suffered by us, our linguists must be active in the field, describing and analysing these languages on the deathbed.

I began by making a mild claim that linguists in Nepal are not as rare as snakes in Ireland. I hope in the foreseeable future there will be many more of them and that the discipline of linguistics will continue to flower with increasing institutional support and formal academic patronage. My best wishes are for all those who, in spite of severe handicaps, are at present engaged in teaching, research and fieldwork in linguistics.

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Language and Society in Nepal

Historical Perspective

Nepal emerged as a modern nation-state with the present-day boundaries only recently. Within its modem political boundaries, there are numerous ethnic groups speaking scores of languages and dialects. The earliest archaeological evidence of language use found in Nepal is epigraphic. This is inscribed on a sandstone pillar from about 250 BC. It was erected by the Indian Emperor Asoka in Lumbini to commemorate the Emperor's visit to the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. For the next 700 years we have no linguistic evidence of any kind. In the Kathmandu Valley, the earliest evidence of language use is attested on a victory pillar erected by King Mānadeva in AD 464 at Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa temple. The language of this inscription is Classical Sanskrit and the script is Gupta, a script used in north India at that time. Mānadeva belonged to the ruling dynasty known as the Licchavis. It is believed that they came to the Kathmandu Valley from Vaiśāli around the 1st century AD, and when they became a dominant political power they, like their kinsmen—the imperial Guptas—patronised Sanskrit and made it the prestige language of epigraphy. The indigenous population of the Valley was possibly of a non-Indo-Aryan stock. According to a fourteenth-century chronicle of Nepal, the Kirātas ruled the Valley for nearly two millennia before the arrival of the Licchavis. It is very likely that they spoke dialects of the Sino-Tibetan language family. That the aboriginals of the Valley were ethnically of a non-Aryan racial stock seems to be evident from the non-Sanskrit place-names and words which

appear in the Sanskrit inscriptions to be found in the Valley. More than 80 per cent of the place-names in the extant Licchavi inscriptions dated between AD 464-879 are non-Sanskrit. Several of these are, in fact, archaic forms of Newari.

Since the Valley was Hinduised very early, the Indic diffusion must have begun with the religious acculturation of the Valley population. The local laity must, in the meantime, have come in social contact with the missionaries of apostolic religions and north Indian traders who spoke Indo-Aryan Prakrits. With the arrival of the Licchavis around the early centuries AD, Sanskrit was encouraged as a language of epigraphy. As against the local vernaculars it was probably the symbol of the new ruling and cultural elite. The very remoteness of this language from the speech of the common man presented itself as the voice of authority requiring the services of the initiated mediator (*dutaka*) for interpreting the edicts. Steadily, literacy became the preserved function of the priesthood and that Sanskrit was the language of both religions in Nepal is evident from the fact that all the extant ancient sacred texts of both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism found in Nepal are in Sanskrit. Ancient Nepalese manuscripts belonging to the 9th and 10th century are extant in Nepalese and Western collections, but the language of these manuscripts is invariably Sanskrit. As the priesthood built a stronghold in society in the first millennium AD, they sanctified Sanskrit in all rituals and localised literacy as a priestly occupation. It was the Hindu and Buddhist priests and scribes who composed and engraved the inscriptions; it was they who wrote, copied, and studied the texts and scriptures in ancient and mediaeval courts and monasteries of Nepal. Sometime towards the beginning of the 10th century AD, the engravers and copyists in Nepal seemed, out of idiosyncratic or aesthetic impulse, to have evolved an increasingly local variety of script out of the Gupta characters. By the 13th century AD there were at least three different varieties of Nepalese script in use among the copyists in the court and monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley.

Vernacularisation of the literate culture started only after the first millennium AD, perhaps with the decline of Sanskrit scholarship among the priesthood. Scholars must have found it increasingly necessary to write commentaries and translations—however poor they were as substitutes—to maintain the sanctity of the original texts and rituals. Vernacularisation began first with the inscriptions because they were for lay consumption. At first, only technical details (i.e., the location

and size of the land granted, the amount of gold donated, etc.) were mentioned in Newari. It was during the early Malla period (AD 1200-1482) that the Newari language was instituted as a rival of Sanskrit in epigraphy. As far as manuscripts are concerned, Newari became the language of literature under the court patronage only after the restoration of the Malla dynasty in the second half of the 14th century. It was during this period that Newari commentaries on and translations of Sanskrit texts/classics such as *Haramekhalā* (Newari translation AD 1374), *Nāradasmṛti* (Newari translation AD 1380) and *Amarakośa* (Newari translation AD 1381) were accomplished. An original chronicle, now known as the *Gopālarājavaṃṣāvalī*, was compiled in Sanskrit and Newari in the 1380s. Under the patronage of Jayasthitirāja Malla's court (AD 1382-1395) Newari began to be used for epigraphy, historical records, and dramatic and literary compositions. With the arrival of the Maithil ruler Harasimhadeva and his retinue in Nepal in AD 1326, the later Malla courts became increasingly polyglot, and along with Sanskrit and Newari a number of New Indo-Aryan vernaculars, such as Maithili and Bengali, began to penetrate the literate culture of the Nepal Valley. Although Newari is a Tibeto-Burman language, it has undergone profound changes in its phonology, grammar and lexicon ever since it came into early contacts with Sanskrit and Prakrits. Since about AD 1200, written Newari began to permeate with Sanskrit as well as the New Indo-Aryan diffusion. Between the middle of the fourteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, Classical Newari literature flourished and branched out into several genres such as poetry, drama, narrative and technical literature. The earliest dated poems in Classical Newari go back to AD 1573, the earliest drama to *ca*. AD 1673; the earliest narrative text to AD 1576 whereas the earliest technical texts go back to AD 1314.[1] Though both native and foreign scholars have recently begun to take interest in this literature much of it is still unexplored. Because of the break in the continuity and the loss of contacts with the written tradition after the conquest of the Valley, the gap between spoken and written Newari began to widen. Not many educated Newars can read this literature nor can they decipher the scripts in which it is written.

After the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley, Newari was replaced by *khas kurā*, a language written in the Devanagari script. It is also known

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1 See Malla, 1982.

as *parbatiyā* (the language of the hill people). Until 1933 it used to be officially called *Gorkhāli*. Today, however, it is known as Nepali. Assisted by the Magar and Gurung tribes of western Nepal, the Khas Brahmins and Chetris overran, not only the whole of modern Nepal, but also reached up to Sikkim in the east and the banks of the River Sutlej in the west between AD 1742 and 1814. The *khas kurā* spread with the Khas military campaign of expansion and conquest in the Himalayas. As early as 1802-3 Hamilton noted:

> The language spoken by the mountain Hindus in the vicinity of Kathmandu is usually called the Parbatiya Bhasa, or mountain dialect but west from the Capital, it is more commonly known by the name of Khasa Bhasa, or dialect of the Khas country, because it seems to have been first introduced into the territory of that name....
>
> There can be no doubt that it is a dialect of the Hindus [sic] language; and it is making rapid progress in extinguishing the aboriginal dialects of the mountains.[2]

In the course of military campaigns, the Khasas spread from western Nepal, their original home, to eastern Nepal thus practically all over the hills of Nepal. Recently, they have penetrated the once malarious Tarai plains, often economically and politically displacing the indigenous populations of these fertile lowlands. Thus through migration, conquest, and displacement, the *khas kurā*, or Nepali, has come to serve as the *lingua franca* between diverse linguistic communities in the Nepal Himalaya. The political and cultural ascendancy of Nepali, at first as a *lingua franca* and now as the national language of Nepal is, thus, not due to an arbitrary or abrupt political decision, nor is it due to innate resources of the Nepali language. It is a consequence of history.

Language Demography and Multilingualism

Language is at once both a unifying and a dividing force in society. It would be a happy but over-simplified generalisation to talk of two languages, two peoples, or even two cultures of Nepal—the language and culture of the conquerors (i.e., the Gorkhalis) and the language and culture of the subjugated peoples (e.g., the Newars of the Kathmandu

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2 Hamilton, 1819, p. 16.

Valley). Such a neat segmentation—as proposed by the late French Orientalist Sylvain Lévi in his classic *Le Népal* (1905-8)—is not very helpful for examining the complex ethnic, cultural and, above all, linguistic situation in Nepal. Although some sort of census has been taken in Nepal every ten years since 1911, officially published figures are available only for a short period. In 1952, a census was begun in all the districts except Mahottari, but it was not completed on a nationwide basis until 1954. Although in the 1952/54 Census such unhelpful language labels as Eastern Terai Dialects, Mid-Western Terai Dialects, Maithil Pradesh Dialects, etc, were used more languages are enumerated in this census than in the later ones. At any rate, Nepal's language demography is not inspired by a spirit of scientific accuracy: it is dictated by the expediencies of census operations. Neither the instruments of data collection nor the collectors of data are irreproachable. Besides the inherent ambiguity of the crucial conceptual terms such as *language* and *dialect*, in Nepal they are even more so. No wonder that nearly 18 mutually unintelligible East Himalayan languages are lumped together as 'Rai-Kirat' in the language census of Nepal!

The 1952/54 Census Report lists 36 languages by name as spoken in the Kingdom of Nepal. In 1961 the census obtained information on 52 languages but the tabulation was made for 36 languages only,[3] leaving out the separate enumeration of such languages as Byansi, Hayu, Rote, Loke, Kham, Kaike, Routya, Kusanda, among others. The 1971 Census Report lists 17 languages by name, leaving a residue of 487,060 in the 'Others' category. The 1981 Census provided tabulation on 18 languages leaving a residue of 764,802 persons in the category of 'other/unstated'. This group accounted for 5.09 per cent of the population.[4] It is now no longer possible to know what may have happened to these 18 other languages spoken in Nepal. Most people using the census figures raise serious doubts as to the accuracy of the percentage of rise or fall in the number of speakers. On the CBS's own evaluation, the census in Nepal 'is not up to the standard expected and low quality operation (with) too small [a] number of enumerators to cope with the increasing population and the difficulties of the mountainous topography which comprise about 83 percent of (Nepal's) land mass'.[5]

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3 CBS, 1987, p. 67.

4 Ibid.

5 CBS, 1987, pp. 335-336.

However, the language tables, which should be used with scepticism and caution, could give a rough and ready picture of the linguistic diversity and geographic distribution of different communities and the prevailing trends in the sociolinguistic profile of Nepal.

Nepal has about 70 mutually unintelligible languages spoken within its present-day political boundaries. These languages belong to four languages families. The following are some of the better known among them, with the number of speakers returned in the censuses:

	1952/54	1961	1971	1981
a. The Dravidian Language Family				
1. Jhangad/Dhangad				
b. The Austroasiatic Language Family				
1. Santhal/Satar		10,605	3,193	5,804
c. The Sino-Tibetan Language Family				
1. Bramu/Bhramu				
2. Byansi	1,786			
3. Chantel				
4.Chepang	14,216	9,247		
5. Dolpali				
6. Dura				
7. Gurung	162,192	157,778	171,609	174,464
8. Jangali				
9. Jirel	2,721	2,757		
10. Kagate				
11. Kaike				
12. Kham				
13. Khambu				
14. Kusunda				
15. Tamang languages	494,745	518,882	555,056	
16. Lepcha/Rong		1,272		
17. Lhomi				
18. Limbu	145,511	138,705	170,787	129,234
19. Magar	273,780	254,675	288,383	212,628
20. Meche	523	938		
21. Newari	383,184	377,727	454,979	448,746
22. Pahari	864	3,002		

	1952/54	1961	1971	1981
23. Rai-Kirat languages	236,049	239,749	232,264	221,333
24. Raji	1514	801		
25. Routya				
26. Thakali	3,307	4,134		
27. Sherpa	70,132	84,229	79,218	73,589
28. Sunuwar	17,299	13,362	20,380	10,650
29. Surel				
30. Bhujel				
31. Thami	10,240	9,046		
32. Vayu/Hayu	233			
33. Tibetan				
34. Dhimal	5,671	8,186		
35. Manangba				
36. Nishangba				
d. The Indo-European Language Family				
1. Avadhi		447,960	316,950	234,343
2. Bhojpuri	16,355	557,357	806,480	1142,805
3. Maithili	300,768	1,130,401	1,327,242	1,668,308
4. Bote	649			
5. Churaute				
6. Darai	3,084	1,645		
7. Danuwar	9,138	11,624	9,959	13,522
8. Majhi	5,729	5,854		
9. Nepali	4,013,567	4,796,528	6,060,758	8,767,361
10. Rajvamsi	35,543	55,803	55,124	59,383
11. Tharu languages	359,594	406,907	495,881	545,685
12. Hindi	80,181	2,867		
13. Urdu	32,545	2,650		
14. Marvari	4,244	6,716		

Thus in Nepal there are some 70 languages belonging to four language families. Whereas the Indo-European languages are fewer in number (14 in all) the number of their speakers is greater than those of the Sino-Tibetan languages (about 56 in all). With the exception of Nepali, few Indo-European languages are spoken in the highlands of Nepal whereas the ecological distribution of the Sino-Tibetan lan-

guages is mainly in the mountains and hills of Nepal Himalaya. The most striking feature of Nepal's multilingualism is that it has *many language* with very *few speakers*. Out of the total number of languages, only 10 languages are spoken by more than one per cent of the total population, and among the remaining, some languages such as Hayu/Vayu are spoken by as few as 233 persons! The late Sir Ralph Turner, distinguished scholar of Indo-Aryan languages, remarked on this staggering extent of linguistic diversity in Nepal:

> In a population of under six millions [sic] in all there are spoken at least a score, if not indeed a still—larger number of languages, all mutually unintelligible, and some broken up again into numerous and often very different dialects. Even within the limits of a single valley there may be a village the inhabitants of which speak a language completely unintelligible to their neighbours in the next village a mile or two away...The origin of this diversity is to be found firstly in the various migrations which have brought the present population into the country, and secondly in the difficulties of inter-communication imposed by the geographical features.[6]

Some scholars have described Nepal as the ethnic turntable of Asia, and the movement of peoples has been just as important a feature of its history as the intractability of its surface been a feature of its geography. Over the centuries the people who had arrived here from four quarters have been trapped in isolation by its geography until recently. Improved means of transport and communication and other modern institutions such as the army, the police, the bureaucracy and the social services have helped bring the population of Nepal together. Above all, a market economy and the monetisation of most economic activities have compelled different speech communities and ethnic groups to interact not only at *melas* and *hat bazaars*, but also elsewhere.

Bilingualism

There are no sound and reliable studies on the incidence of bilingualism in Nepal.[7] According to the 1952/54 Census Report, Nepali is used as a second language by 13.3 percent (1,111,517) of the total population

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6 Turner, 1928, p. 63.

7 See Subba, 1975; Subba et al, 1977.

of Nepal. Some 19 percent of the populations in the Hills and the Inner Tarai used Nepali as the second language whereas only 2.9 percent did so in the Eastern and Western Terai. The later census reports do not give any figures relating to bilingualism. The lowland Tarai had been the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Tharu-speaking areas in the past. But both the resettlement and land distribution policies of His Majesty's Government have encouraged the hill settlers in these areas. Consequently, there has been a greater incidence of bilingualism and weakening of linguistic homogeneity of these regions. The trend will be clear from the following table comparing the 1971 and 1981 Census figures for the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Tharu languages in their former strongholds.

Percentage of Total Speakers

Zone	Maithili		Bhojpuri		Awadhi		Tharu	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
Sagarmatha	91	80						
Janakpur								
Narayani			85	56				
Lumbini			15	30				
Bheri					13	26		
Seti								
Bheri							75	69

The mother tongues of the majority of the population of some of these zones still continue to be non-Nepali. Among the non-Nepali languages spoken in these zones, Maithili in Janakpur and Sagarmatha and Bhojpuri in Narayani constitute the single most important languages. About 40 percent of the people in Sagarmatha and 47 percent in Janakpur spoke Maithili in 1981. Bhojpuri was the mother tongue of 44 per cent of the people of Narayani zone in 1981. Tharu was spoken by about 10 percent in Rapti, 17 percent each in Bheri and Seti Zones. In terms of percentage the group total of these Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the Tarai is 25 percent of the total population of Nepal. As a consequence of prolonged isolation of the Tarai from the hills, a policy relentlessly followed by the hill-dominated political structure since the days of Rana rule, the social, cultural and economic integration of the Tarai with the rest of the hill country of Nepal will take time. Maithili, Bhojpuri and

Awadhi each has a literature of its own. But the bulk of the literature in these languages were produced not in Nepal but in Bihar and UP. In the recent past, there were some activities of a creative nature attempted by the Tarai elite mostly confined to the publication of literary journals (*Navajāgaraṇa, Ijot, Phulpāt, Maithili, Vāṇi, Arcanā* and *Gāmghar* published in Maithili from Janakpur and Biratnagar). With the exception of *Gāmghar* all other publications have been discontinued. The Maithili Sahitya Parisad, the Triveni Parivar, and the Tharu Cultural Council are the leading literary-cultural groups in the Nepal Tarai. Hindi—the *lingua franca* of the Tarai—had been at one time the rallying point of some sections of the Tarai intellectuals and politicians.[8]

The picture is less simple in the hills. The Nepali-speaking Khas Brahmins and Chetris as well as the occupational castes serving them are scattered all over the hills. They live in overwhelming numbers in the western mountains, but their density decreases relatively as one moves east and from the hills in the north to lower altitudes in the south. The Khasas are Indo-Aryans and mountain Hindus whereas, ethnically speaking, almost the whole of the remaining population of the Nepal Himalaya are Mongoloid tribals or adherents of shamanism or Lamaist Buddhism: the Magars and the Gurungs in the west; the Sherpas in the north; the Tamangs in the central hills; the Rais and the Limbus in the east. All these ethnic groups have their own languages; some have adopted the Tibetan script, others have ancient systems of writing. The Sherpas, in particular, have a rich oral and canonical literature preserved through and studied in their monasteries. The Limbus have a literate tradition including a Veda—*Mundhum*—of their own. But their links with their traditions and past have become weaker day by day. Although once in a while a few cultural patriots among these speech communities have published sundry items on their cultures and languages, the usual tendency among them is to adopt Nepali and become bilinguals. This tendency is most pronounced in the western hills among the Gurungs, the Magars and the Thakalis.

The same tendency to adopt Nepali and become bilingual, or even to cease speaking any ethnic language except among ones primary group and kinship circle is growing in the eastern hills as well. This is due to a number of factors. First, Nepali has been a *lingua franca* throughout

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8 See Verma, 1988.

the hills for some time. Secondly, it has been the language of social prestige in terms of civil, military or police service—mostly military, either in the Nepal Army or the Gorkha Rifles of India or Britain. Thirdly, in terms of literacy and availability of printed materials there is no scope for minority languages of the hills. Finally, as the national language has been identified with Nepal's increasing aspirations towards nationhood, any attempt at language loyalty or revival is often interpreted as communalism or tribalism. As a CBS report puts it, 'Nepali is the official language and many people may feel proud in reporting themselves as knowing Nepali'.[9]

With the rise in literacy and economic standards, a distinct sense of oneness with the tribe or the speech community (language serving as an immediate marker of group identity and loyalty) may grow in the future, but it is unlikely to go further than that. At least, the present trends among the literate in the hills are in the opposite direction. This may also be because there are hardly any opportunities to read their languages in school at any stage and there is little language tradition to rely upon. Where there is something to fall back upon, the links with the past have become weaker as in the case of the Sherpas who are now climbers and trekking guides rather than monks cloistered in Buddhist monasteries. The smaller the size of the linguistic community, the greater becomes the case against a strong loyalty. And most linguistic communities in Nepal are invariably small.

Language Maintenance: The Case of Newari

An interesting case in point is the Newari language. If there is any language in Nepal which, in the range of use and cultural importance, approaches Nepali, it is Newari. The Newari-speakers, unlike the speakers of other languages, are scattered all over Nepal, though in small numbers, in all urban areas, in district headquarters and trade-centres. In 1981, 20 percent of Nepal's urban population spoke Newari. According to the Census Report of 1961, 'As a language spoken in every district of the Kingdom, Newari occupies the second place'.[10] Their largest concentration has been in the Kathmandu Valley—their original home—where they constituted 55 percent of the total population in 1954. But

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9 CBS, 1987, p. 106.

10 CBS, 1967, p. 44.

because of the internal migration of people from all over the kingdom into the Valley in the last 30 years, the Newari-speakers now constitute only 35.33 percent of the Valley's total population. This percentage may have gone even lower because as one study puts it:

> Out of about 19,571 in-migrants Brahmins and Chhetris constitute 44 per cent of the in-migrants. Other Hill ethnic groups account for 26 per cent while Newars constitute another 4 per cent of the in-migrants. The magnitude of in-migrants has increased considerably within the last 10 to 15 years.[11]

Since the l920s, the Newar literary elite have been struggling to revive their language. Determined to suppress all creative activities in Newari, the Ranas imprisoned and exiled several Newari writers and poets. Under pressure from Indian Buddhist leaders, publishing in Newari was permitted in 1946, and roughly 2000 titles have been published since—all of which are financed and sponsored by the writers and their organisations from within the speech community. There are now about 25 journals and magazines mostly published by university campus-based literary groups—one daily, two weeklies, and some 110 literary-cultural groups engaged in organising such activities as literary conferences, poetry recitals, staging plays, publishing books and magazines, and popularising the older scripts and sponsoring mediated music and films.

Being in the centre of political activity, administration, trade and education, the Newari-speakers have an advantageous position over other non-Nepali language communities. They also had an earlier educational start than any other non-Nepali speaking community in Nepal. So literacy is very high, comparatively speaking—one of the highest in Nepal. They represent about 30 percent of Nepal's professional-technical-administrative manpower. Prior to 1954, Newari was not taught at any stage in schools. Only a few can write it now. The older scripts were abandoned as early as 1909, and the Devanagari script was adopted by Newari writers. Today Newari is a subject studied and taught in schools and university campuses. As far as writing goes, it is confined to literary, creative and journalistic use alone. It is very rarely used for written social discourse by Newari-speakers. Most of them,

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11 The National Commission on Population, 1983, p. 5.

particularly the urban middle classes, are bilingual speakers of Nepali. Those in the bureaucracy and those who are living outside the Kathmandu Valley tend to switch over to Nepali. Even inside the Valley, there has recently been a growing tendency among the middle-class parents to use Nepali while communicating with their children though they themselves may still continue to use Newari while communicating in their peer groups. Nepali was adopted by the Newars whose forefathers had migrated or were driven out of the Valley. The size and the beleaguered position of the Newars is the weakest point in the language loyalty among the Newars. Though they number less than 500,000 in the whole kingdom, their language loyalty has remained one of the strongest in Nepal. In a sense, this is more a manifestation of cultural identity-seeking than of ethnocentricity, because the Newars are a community composed of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious influences so that where they have not adopted Nepali as bilinguals they have no common identity except their language.

Nepali: From Lingua Franca to the National Language

The 1959 and the 1962 Constitutions of Nepal confer the status of the national language to Nepali. The term *Nepali*, as it is used for this language, 'was used and made popular by the missionaries and British scholars...The feeling of Nepali linguistic nationalism that grew in India was able to replace the terms like *Khas kurā, Parbatiya* or *Gorkhali* by *Nepali* in India. It also influenced the authorities in Nepal and the first word of *Gorkha Bhasha Prakashini Samiti* was changed to *Nepali*'.[12] Several assumptions have been made about the origin of Nepali but they remain to be proved with sufficient linguistic evidence. Nepali was a language in use in the Khasa dynasty and was not the language brought by the fleeing Rajputs from the midland of India. According to Chatterjee probably the Dardic-speaking Aryans (Khasas and other tribes) were penetrating into the central Himalayan area (the western Pahari and eastern Pahari regions) and their Dardic khas speech was later overlaid by Indo-Aryan from the midland.[13] The earliest attested evidence of *Khas kurā* goes back to a 12-line Tibetan-Khas bilingual grant dated AD 1321, issued by Abhaya Malla. After the 14th century, the Khasa Malla King-

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12 Bandhu, 1989, pp. 5-7.
13 Chatterji, 1978, p. 52.

dom of western Nepal broke up into small principalities scattered in the mid-hills, moving slowly eastward. The extant evidence of *Khas kurā* during the l4th-l7th centuries are all epigraphic and documentary, and the surviving compositions in the language up to the mid-l8th century are of doubtful authenticity and literary merit.[14] By the end of the 17th century, the Khas-speakers were encouraged to settle in small communities in the Kathmandu Valley as mercenaries or in the outskirts to cultivate unirrigated hillside or high lands. The earliest evidence of the use of Nepali in manuscripts traced so far is a translation (dated AD 1716) of an Ayurvedic book, *Jvarottpatti Cikitsa* (medication of fever). The use of Nepali prose for literary purposes was, indeed, very rare even after the founding of the unified kingdom because the Khas Brahminical intelligentsia favoured Sanskrit as a medium of learned discourse and composition. As far as original creative writings are concerned, we are able to discover only some of the works of the unification period—from later half of 18th century. The Nepali version of the *Ramayana* by Bhanubhakta Acharya 1814-l869) was brought into light through its publication by another Nepali literary figure, Moti Ram Bhatta (1866-1896). With Moti Ram Bhatta, Nepali language entered into the age of printing and the domain of the Nepali language got widely extended into various genres of literature.[15] With the establishment of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samiti (Gorkha Language Publishing House) in 1913 some efforts were made to make Nepali a stable language. A secular and modern literature began to flourish in Nepali with the founding in 1934 of the literary monthly *Sharada*. Thus, although Nepali had been the court language for two hundred years, its popular flowering is a recent phenomenon. Nepali was not made a compulsory language of law and administration, let alone the national language, until 1905 when the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher declared documents written in other languages than Nepali invalid in the courts of justice.

During this century, Nepali has taken great strides to raise itself to the status of the national language. Although studies on the comprehension and use of Nepali by non-Nepali speakers are far and few between,[16] sheer expediency seems to have driven more and more non-Nepali

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14 Hutt, 1988.
15 Bandhu, 1989.
16 See Shrestha, 1979; Tuladhar and Tuladhar, 1979.

speakers to use and understand it in their day-to-day transactions, inter-ethnic communication, and above all in their communication with the channels of local and national administration. In all these avenues of communication some form of Nepali has been in use for the last two centuries. The rise of Nepali, first as a *lingua franca* in the wake of the Gorkhali military campaigns (ca. AD 1742-1814), then its continuous use as the language of authority and administration, the total ousting of all other languages, particularly Newari and Maithili from the courts, and the final triumph of instituting Nepali as the national language of Nepal, completed a long historical process that has been going on in parallel to the political unification of Nepal's fifty or so principalities.

Language Planning

The activity of preparing normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community' is the function of language planning. The resulting standard language will have two mutually supporting aspects, on the one hand a generally accepted orthography and on the other a prestige dialect imitated by the socially ambitious.[17] However, the standardisation of Nepali has been a painfully slow process. Because of their interest in the Gorkhalis, British scholars laid the foundations for the standardising process by taking up the study of Nepali seriously. As early as 1820, J.A. Ayton published *Grammar of the Nepalese Language* which is the first grammar of Nepali ever written. In the present century, Sir Ralph Turner's *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (1931) is a work of classic standing. In the last 70 years some Nepali scholars, too, have published grammars and dictionaries. The first indigenous grammar was *Gorkha-Bhasa Vyakarna Candrika*—written by the royal preceptor Pandit Hemraj Pandey and published in 1912. *Madhya Candrika*, a popular version of this scholarly grammar, was published in 1920 by Somanath Sharma. In 1949 Pushkar Shumsher Rana (1902-60) published another textbook version, *Nepali Sajilo Vyakarana*. He also edited a two-volume English-Nepali version of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (1936-1938). The first indigenous monolingual dictionary in Nepali was published in 1951. This was Pundit

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17 Haugen, 1968, pp. 673-674.

Ramchandra Dhungana's *Samchipta Nepali Sabdakosa*. In 1962, the Royal Nepal Academy published the first major Nepali monolingual dictionary. This was Balachandra Sharma's *Nepali Sabdakosa*. This was followed recently by yet another somewhat controversial monolingual dictionary *Nepali Vrhat Sabdakosa* (1983). The Academy has also published an elaborate grammar of the Nepali language.[18]

Despite the fact that points of grammar and usage are often disputed, the dust of controversy tends to settle under the pressure of the needs of everyday communication. The actual points of dispute, very often, are not so much the norms of orthography and grammar as the degree of Sanskritisation of Nepali vocabulary. Like all other Indo-Aryan Languages of South Asia, Nepali has to rely on Sanskrit roots for learned, abstract, and technical vocabulary. For handling intellectual, abstract or technical discourse of any kind, Nepali has to fall back upon Sanskritised forms. More than 85 percent of its vocabulary is cognate with Hindi, from which it has borrowed more words in the last 40 years than from all the rest of Nepalese languages put together in the whole history of modern Nepal. At a certain level Nepali becomes indistinguishable from Hindi, except for structural items and other incidental particles. Linguistic nationalists, however, want to preserve the indigenous flavour of Nepali by coining new terms from indigenous roots while the Sanskrit-oriented writers and scholars want to borrow as many words as possible from Sanskritised Hindi. However, Nepali purists are finding it more and more difficult to make their inventions acceptable, and they have not succeeded in having more than a few dozen words admitted to cultivated usage. Sanskritisation of the literate culture is thus a most prominent cultural process at work in Nepal's contemporary history. The media—Radio Nepal, Nepal Television, the local newspapers, popular books—have in one way or the other, encouraged the tendency. Other than English or Hindi, Nepali is the only important language to which an average literate Nepalese is likely to be exposed. Apart from the 8.7 million Nepali-speakers in Nepal, there are about three million Nepali-speakers in India. Politically and numerically, the status of Nepali is, thus, unquestionable. Like all other languages of the underdeveloped regions of Asia and Africa, the question about Nepali is however, the question of its intrinsic potentialities, mainly

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18 Bhattarai, 1976.

in terms of available vocabulary for the whole range of functions that a full-fledged language is required to perform. Nepali may presently burst at the scams with an unmanageable load of Sanskritised vocabulary, but it is proving effective for a wide range of communicative activities.

Since the founding of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samiti—the Samiti for short—publishing in Nepali has been going on more or less steadily. It has enriched the treasury of printed Nepali literature which now totals about 22000 titles. Originally the Samiti was a government agency for censorship, but it was also an embryonic and improvised version of the Academy in that it set standards by publishing original and translated works in Nepali. In 1965, it was converted into a publishing corporation called the Sajha (cooperative) which continued to publish textbooks and readers in Nepali as well as literary texts.

The Education Materials Production Centre, established in 1962, has produced about 150 standardised textbooks in Nepali for schools. Similarly, the Curriculum Development Centre of Tribhuvan University has sponsored and published about 20 textbooks in Nepali for use at different levels and faculties of university education. The Royal Nepal Academy, founded in 1957, aims at the promotion of the arts, cultures, languages and letters of Nepal. In the past 32 years, it has produced about 367 commendable works in Nepali, mainly literary in nature, including translations from Oriental and Western literatures. Radio Nepal and the Nepal Television sponsor programmes in Nepali and English. Except for a weekly half an hour regional music programme, Radio Nepal does not broadcast any item in other Nepali languages although the network does broadcast hours of Hindi films and film-songs, Pakistani films, rock music, English crime films and spy movies.

The press in Nepal is too fragmented, and from the professional and management point of view, not too gratifying an enterprise. In 1986-87, out of 455 registered newspapers, 417 were in Nepali, 32 in English, three in Newari, one each in Hindi, Maithili, and Bhojpuri. Except for about half a dozen newspapers, these 455 papers are nominal and symbolic publications with doubtful news or public opinion value or circulation.

Language Policy

His Majesty's Government has the declared policy that over the years Nepali should become the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Apart from this, the Government policy towards language is that

Nepali and *only* Nepali among the languages of Nepal should be used in administration, courts of justice, information and the media. Nepali is the only language used and promoted also by semi-governmental bodies such as the Royal Nepal Academy and other publishing concerns with large government shares and investment. Only two Nepalese languages, Maithili and Newari, are introduced as optional subjects in the school curriculum at the secondary level from Grade 8-10. At the university level, these two languages continue to be taught in selected campuses up to the Masters level as principal elective subjects. Students may answer questions in Nepali or English. In higher education, most subjects, except the languages, are taught in English, although now there is a noticeable tendency to use Nepali instead. Students at the university level are severely handicapped by the problem of medium and the acute dearth of textbooks and reference materials in Nepali. There are hardly 100 textbooks in Nepali that are usable in campuses most of which are published by the Curriculum Development Centre of Tribhuvan University in the last sixteen years.

His Majesty's Government is determined, not only to promote Nepali as an instrument of national integration, but also to discourage all culturally divisive tendencies. For example, Radio Nepal used to broadcast news in Hindi and Newari, together with Nepali and English. Since April 15, 1965, however, the news broadcasts in Hindi and Newari have been discontinued. The official explanation was that this was done 'for the time being until more powerful transmitters would become available.' On October 12, 1957 the K.I. Singh government announced that to qualify for government aid and recognition under the new policy, the Tarai schools were required to use Nepali as the language of instruction in middle and high schools, and to use textbooks approved by the government. Furthermore, all teachers had to be Nepali citizens and they were required to attain a specified degree of proficiency in Nepali by 1959. This led to a vigorous movement against the imposition of Nepali in the Tarai and vocal demands for the recognition of Hindi as the national language. The language issue divided the Tarai politicians, not along ideological or party lines, but on the basis of regional loyalties. The Newari-speakers of the Kathmandu Valley at one time demanded the status of an associate official language for Newari in the Valley. The political instability of post-1950 Nepal greatly favoured all kinds of lin-

guistic wishful thinking. The 1952/54 Census Report became a crucial document in the language controversy, So did the National Education Planning Commission's Report recommending that

> Nepali should be the medium of instruction from the 3rd grade on and, as much as possible, in the first two grades. No other language should be taught, even optionally, in the primary school, because few children will have need for them, they would hinder the teaching of Nepali.

These documents gave the government enough evidence and political courage to settle the question of a national language in favour of Nepali, a status it had held informally for quite some time.

Language Movements

The Constitution of Nepal and the national policy documents have conferred the status of the national language to Nepali, presumably, on the basis of three major considerations: 1) it is a language spoken by the majority (58.36 percent in 1981); 2) it is a language understood by the majority; and 3) it is a language used by the majority. The value which motivates the State in Nepal in the uncontested promotion of Nepali is national unity. In the last few decades, the use of Nepali in public life has been promoted with some determination. This may be why the heads of our constitutional organs unfailingly attend the birthday of Bhanubhakta Acharya and Moti Ram Bhatta, basking in the neon lights of the Nepal Television, while the Chief District Officer of Bhaktapur dug out the unveiled statue of Jagat Sunder Malla, a Newari writer who pleaded for education in the mother tongue. The claim that Nepali and Nepali alone can be the instrument of national integration and that the promotion of any other language is disintegrative, is politics. This has recently given rise to unconcealed fear in some quarters that Nepali is being promoted by the State, not so much as an instrument of national integration but as 'an unfailing tool of cultural domination by a minority of Khas Brahmins'.[19]

Language movements originate from those who feel a sense of belonging and solidarity among members with a minimal degree of organisation characterised by a commitment for change and a concern

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19 Adhikari, 1987; Lama, 1987; Singh, 1985.

with the status quo. This concern may be related to the achievement of separate identity, recognition for certain statutory privileges, and acceptance for use in certain domains of the public life. During the 1920s-1940s, the poets and writers in Newari joined hands with the anti-Rana movement and several of them were fined, tortured and jailed and had their property confiscated for writing or publishing in Newari. The language movement launched by the late Dharmaditya Dharmacharya in the 1920s was only a part and parcel of the social, intellectual and political unrest set in motion by Madhav Raj Joshi in 1905. It was a part of the movement against the Rana repression which came to an end with the fall of the Ranas in 1951.

Until recent years few language communities other than the Hindi-using Tarai and the Newari-speakers in the Kathmandu Valley have ever made a noise for the status of their languages. The post-1979 political turmoil has unleashed numerous forces in Nepalese society, and one of the most remarkable is the demand for language rights, voiced by non-Nepali speakers. Various ethnic forums and Leftist writers, intellectuals, politicians, journalists, and publications have voiced their demands for 'equal language rights.' Since the announcement of the Referendum in 1979, different speech communities of Nepal are getting organised and becoming politically articulate. A number of them have set up their own organisations and launched journals and publications to voice their resentment against the State policy of 'one nation one language'. Among the opposition political groups, different shades and factions of the Left have raised their voice on behalf of these speech communities. They have raised three main slogans: 1. all languages are equal 2. No language should be given the privileged status of the national language at the cost of others. 3. a contact language will emerge on its own, and the State must not intervene to promote any single language. Equality, not unity, is the core value stressed by the Leftists, most of them drawing their ideological inspiration from a brief paper by Lenin (1914). A few among them also stress the need for a contact language to communicate among the equal languages while others are willing to concede this status to Nepali without calling it the national language. Still others such as Parijat (1986) and Bhatta (1987) give Nepali the status of the national language.

This has given birth to a lively and vigorous controversy among Leftists. Underlying the whole controversy is a classic 'Orwellian' ideologi-

cal trap, i.e., all languages are equal, but at least one language will have to be more equal than others to enable the equals to communicate among themselves. Few contributors to this controversy approve the State policy of promoting one language in the name of the national language at the cost of all others. But none has defined the policy and programmatic implications of the concept of equality among the languages of Nepal. If the language demography in Nepal is reliable, there are only 9 languages, other than Nepali, spoken by more than 1 percent of the total population. With the exception of these 'major languages' all speech communities in Nepal are far too small. Secondly, Nepal has well over 70 mutually unintelligible languages spoken within its political borders. This on-going public debate in print apart, there have also been organised expression of these sentiments, such as the Mother Tongue Council, the All Nationalities Forum for Equal Rights, the Nepal Langhali Family, the Tamang Service Trust, the Maithili Sahitya Parisad, and the Nepalabhasa Mankah Khala. The last mentioned recently held a convention in Kathmandu (July 28-29, 1989) represented by about 50 literary-cultural groups to approve, among other things, a 10-point resolution demanding equal 'constitutional status', right to education in the mother tongue, representation of all languages in the media, information and publicity, non-discrimination of non-Nepali language M.A. for public service, protection of all scripts, cultures, literatures, and languages through the Royal Nepal Academy, and other government sponsored corporations.

Conclusion

Language is so much a part of one's way of life, a code through which a people's culture is transmitted from one generation to another. We have a great deal to learn from the recent train of ethnic violence born out of a policy of benign neglect—the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, the Khalistan Movement in the Punjab, the Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling, the tribal Jharkand movement in Bihar and, above all, the emergence of Bangladesh. As in every multilingual polity, in Nepal too there are three possible policy options: 1. assimilation of the minority languages, 2. toleration of the minority languages, and 3. encouragement of the minority languages. The first policy equates nationalism with uniformity; the second language policy equates it with positive tolerance or neglect—benign or malignant—while the last alternative equates nation-

alism with a unity based on cultural pluralism amid diversity. The so-called 'dying languages' can take an agonisingly long time on their death-beds. The question is unity or uniformity. In a multilingual and multi-ethnic society such as Nepal the important consideration in language policy decisions should be political unity as well as cultural pluralism.

In any case, what Nepal does with her minorities and their languages will be the best test of the maturity of her democracy. To ignore them is convenient, but not necessarily the safest way to national integration.

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3

Politics, Education, and the Labour Pains of Linguistics in Nepal

Mr Chairman,
Honourable President of the Linguistic Society of Nepal,
Distinguished Guests and Fellow Participants,

It is, indeed, a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity of participating in the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Linguistic Society of Nepal, one of the few academic associations that is not a trade union nor a politically blessed 'fraternal' organisation. It makes me a little sentimental when I see you, after a quarter of a century—all the faithful and aspiring travellers in a long march to fruition of a common dream come true. Though some of my colleagues have gone gray and also retired from active academic life, I am glad to see them, still striving hard to make some sense of this wonderful tool that man alone possesses in God's plenty. I am particularly delighted to see, not only my seasoned friends, but also bright, young, new faces of the Linguistic Circle of Kathmandu.

Hardly any academic discipline in this University, perhaps other than Social Anthropology, has had such a rough passage as Linguistics. I wish to narrate a few memorable episodes in this narrative full of ups and downs—only a few of the milestones in our long struggle and aspiration for setting up a full-fledged graduate Department of Lin-

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Keynote address delivered at the 25th Annual Conference of the Linguistic Society of Nepal, CNAS Hall, Kirtipur, 26 November, 2004.

guistics in this university—hoping that it might be of some relevance to my younger colleagues in their future projects. It may be worthwhile to learn from the past so that you can be prepared for the coming future so as to ensure the survival of the lineage.

As early as December 27, 1971, when the embryonic Institute of Nepal Studies had just been set up in TU, one of its faculty members called a meeting at the residence of the then Head of English Department, Professor Hugh D. Purcell 'to prepare a working paper on the formation of a Department of Linguistics'. It was attended by Chudamani Bandhu, Dr Everett Austin Hale, and Alan C. MacLean, a British Council lecturer in English Language. The meeting drew up a 17-page document outlining the proposal for setting up a Department of Linguistics, focusing on six of its major branches and a set of three linguistics projects: 1. A Dictionary of Nepali Technical Vocabulary. 2. Linguistic Survey of Nepal, and 3. Research Fellowships in Descriptive Linguistics. A follow-up meeting was held on March 6, 1972, attended by Fr. Ludwig Stiller, T.R. Kansakar, and Tara Nath Sharma.

The meeting concluded by proposing that a minimum of six scholarships for foreign study be awarded to qualified and interested Nepali scholars, with a predominance of scholarships from the United Kingdom and the United States. 'It would be highly desirable to have at least five fully trained linguists in the University before a full-fledged department is established.' Such a Department should certainly be established within three years. The Committee recommended that at least three scholars be sent for study abroad in programmes leading to the M.A. in Linguistics and that they begin their studies abroad by the end of 1972.

In the meantime, we had been involved in two critical efforts at structural reforms in the University, both launched under the leadership of Professor Surya Bahadur Shakya, the then Principal of the University College and Head of English Department. A small Planning Committee was set up in the University following a visit of Dr Malcolm Willey of the Ford Foundation, USA on 30th October 1966 and Sir Robert Atkins, former Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham University, UK in January 1967. The Committee was engaged in a comprehensive exercise to reorganise the faculty and structure of the University under a new Act with a full-fledged Regional College in each of the four development zones. We had prepared a draft of *Tribhuvan University Act, 1970,* to substitute for the then current *TU Act, 1959* which was modelled on Indian University

Acts promulgated in the 19th and early 20th Century. We had proposed a network of Regional Colleges, instead of a University College and a host of proliferating 'affiliated Colleges' spread all over the Kingdom. Both of those proposals were approved by the Government, and formally incorporated in the printed versions of *The Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-74)*.

Then, a dramatic turning point arrived in the history of Nepal's higher education. On September 9, 1969 we, all the nine members of TU Planning Committee (of which I was the youngest), were each given a copy of a 22-page mimeographed document in English, entitled 'Policy and Problems of Education' to be discussed with, Mr Basudeva Dhungana, the Minister of Education, the following Tuesday at the Singha Durbar Meeting Hall. This was the first draft of what was later to be called the National Education System Plan 1971-1976. The gist of this document, 'The Aims of Education' (pp. 2-5), was delivered by King Mahendra at the Rampur Conference of the Nepal University Teachers Association on 2 February 1970. In July 1972, the Education Act 1971 and the Tribhuvan University Act 1972 were promulgated, and this Plan was briskly implemented in Tribhuvan University in the Technical Institutes, including the newly established Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, 'quashing the educational plan drawn up in *The Fourth Five-Year Plan*'—as the late Professor Shakya put it rather bluntly in his book, *Establishing and Development of Tribhuvan University, 1955-1973*.[1]

The document took the University by surprise though the Vice Chancellor, Dr T.N. Upraity, was not unaware of the shape of the university to come. His predecessor, Sardar Rudra Raj Pandey (appointed on July 16, 1965), had already resigned on September 4, 1968 and Dr T.N. Upraity was appointed in his place for a term of five years. Similarly, Mr Surendra Singh K.C. had resigned from the post of the Registrar and Mr Jagat Mohan Adhikary was appointed in his place on July 18, 1972. All this was evidently in preparation for launching the NESP in higher education.

It was, indeed, a 'Hard Plan in a Soft State' intending to change, not only the structure of education, but also its content—a feat which neither Mahatma Gandhi in India, nor Chairman Mao in China succeeded to accomplish. For preparing such a plan, I was initially approached to

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1 Shakya, 1984, p. 241.

join a team of experts in September 1970. Mercifully, by then I had already been nominated by the University for doing a PhD in English in the University of Edinburgh, and I left Kathmandu on October 20, 1970, on a three-year fellowship with study leave. So, I had very little to do, either with the design, or with the initial implementation of the Plan. By the time I came back in February 1974, the Plan was already sailing in the middle of a stormy sea.[2]

It was during the tenure of Dr Upraity as Registrar (1965-1968) that the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), based in the University of North Dakota, then operating from the Deccan College, Poona, approached the University. It signed an initial three-year agreement on December 20, 1966. Following a successful completion of this initial phase, the group published a Special Linguistic Issue of the *Journal of Tribhuvan University* in 1969, of which I was then Executive Editor. It contained some of the earliest results of their research on Gurung, Tamang, and Sherpa. The volume also carried a TG analysis of English Comparatives by Dr Austin Hale. The SIL requested the University for a 10-year extension of their research contract, saying, among other things, that 'as research continues, the theoretical implications will become increasingly clear, deeper studies of individual grammatical and phonological systems will be made, and a clearer picture of the inter-relationships among the languages under study should emerge'. The University, however, agreed to a five-year extension, with the condition that 'a person of TU, if it so desires, shall be associated in each of the SIL Projects.'

One can easily guess why TU could not comply with the terms of this agreement. In the name of 'trained linguist' in the TU Faculty, there was hardly any, and the ones who were then called 'linguists' were mostly educated in Old English or Comparative Philology (at most having done one or two papers in MA).

However, the greatest negative incentive in the promotion of Linguistics in TU was an in-built distrust of most Social Sciences in general and Social Anthropology and Linguistics in particular. Both were branded as subversive and disruptive academic disciplines. They allegedly sow seeds of social and political discontent among the youth. As soon as he took over as the Vice-Chancellor of TU, Sardar Rudra Raj

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2 Malla, 1982, pp. 41-45.

Pandey, a seasoned educationist since the Rana Regime, issued a grave warning to the Boards of Studies in 1965:

> In India, Anthropology, Linguistics, and Sociology led to dissension among the people leading to demands for Linguistic States. Foreign historians, intent upon division between Hindus and Muslims, led to partition in India. So our textbooks in History and Culture should lay special emphasis upon cultural unity and national unity and refute what had been propagated by foreigners.[3]

Apart from the presence of the SIL in the TU Kirtipur Campus, something far-reaching in the life of TU Colleges took place when the First National Conference of English Teachers in TU was held at Kirtipur in October 1968. It was triggered by the reports of two ELT experts, Mr David Rathbone (UNESCO) and Mr James MacFertty, (the British Council). The Conference led to a complete revision of the English Curricula at the Intermediate and Bachelor's levels effective since 1969, separating the Literary courses from the Language courses. The earlier ones resembled the English courses prepared for the children of the 19th-century English gentry—for training Nepali versions of English snobs. We had textbooks such as Jane Austin's *Mansfield Park* and Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* as compulsory items!

As a follow-up, a British Professor supported by the UK Government was recruited for a term of two years to head the graduate Department of English in Tribhuvan University. A language testing specialist, the first thing Dr Alan Davies (from the University of Edinburgh) did was to test the English Proficiency of the students in the Campuses of the Kathmandu Valley. Dr Davies and T.R. Kansakar found that the language skill-level of the students was abysmally poor, and that they were in dire need of the bridge and 'remedial courses' before they could graduate out of any university-level programme.[4] So they decided at first to offer refresher and short-term training courses to EL teachers of the University Colleges. Dr Davies revised the compulsory English courses, without touching any of the traditional literary courses. The English

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3 The Vice-Chancellor's Directives to the Boards of Studies, TU, October 17, 1965. pp. 4-5.

4 Davies and Kansakar, 1971, pp. 43-54.

teachers in the University were so drenched in colonial tradition that for weeks there were vocal attacks on Dr Davies and me, not only from predictable quarters as the Indian teachers well-versed in Eng. Lit, but also from 'linguists' such as Tara Nath Sharma, who lamented that Dr Davies had 'robbed us of the charm of English teaching at the University level.'[5]

I came back to Kathmandu on February 9, 1974 , after completing my orals on a thesis on Models of Stylistic Analysis, conducted by a team including John M. Sinclair and Henry Widdowson. I reported at the English Department, then headed by Dr Hugh E. Purcell from Dublin University, who succeeded Dr Davies in September 1971. In my absence, the University Service Commission had advertised a Professorship of English with a deadline for applying ending on February 10, 1974. This move was evidently intended to forestall my applying for the post. This became more than clear to me when I came to know that TU had also requested for a one-year extension of Dr Purcell's term that would have expired in September 1973.

That I was not welcome in the Department, particularly with a degree in Linguistics, became more than clear to me by the rough dealings of Dr Purcell. He was a literature expert of a sort. More surprising to me was the rumour spread in the Kirtipur Campus that I was going 'to replace Dr P.R. Sharma as the Dean of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies' whose term expired in July 1975. That might be why I was attacked in print in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*[6] by aspiring candidates. It published a curious review, not of the whole book, but only of a single article that I wrote on 'Language' in a book I jointly edited with Pashupati Shumsher J.B. Rana, *Nepal in Perspective* (1973). No doubt, I was offered the post by the then Member-Secretary of the National Education Committee, as soon as Dr Sharma's term was over, but I declined it because I never considered myself a 'Nepal Expert'. I recommended Dr Sharma for continuing for a second term, which he continued to do till 1978. In that harsh review, written jointly by Dr Ballav Mani Dahal and Dr Subhadra Subba, I was rebuked on the grounds that I was 'paro-

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5 See T.N. Sharma, 'Some Thoughts on Presentday English Teaching in Nepal.' *The Rising Nepal* July 31, 1972m and the following reply and rejoinders in the same on August 2, August 7, August 8 and August 9, 1972.

6 *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. I, No.2, 1975. pp. 127-130.

chial' because I labelled Prithvi Narayan Shah's military campaigns as 'Gorkhali Conquest' and that I had given the Newar script and language 'undue importance', and that, above all, I had equated Sikkim with 'a province of India.' If I had done so unwittingly I must have had an unexplained prophetic powers! I could understand the reviewers' tone of censure only when I chanced upon their candid and revealing statement: 'The advent of Panchayat System in December 1960 is a great landmark in the history of Nepali language.'[7]

In an academic ethos such as this, no wonder that in 1976, the SIL was asked to roll up unceremoniously within 24 hours on made-up charges that they were converting the Tamangs in Rasuwa and that they were dropping arms to the insurgent Khampas—the charges which Dr Hale has honestly refuted in transcribed records of a telephone interview given to a Kathmandu-based journalist on April 26, 1993.[8] A bleak morning in 1976, Dr Austin Hale came to my study in tears and said, 'My ten-year efforts in Tibeto-Burman Linguistics have ended up in smoke.' Personally, I see no harm in translating *any* word of God in Nepalese languages. Our own scriptures prescribe that the women and slaves who dare even listen to the Vedas should be punished by pouring hot lead into their ears. The SIL makes no secret of the fact that they are good, God-loving and fearing Christians who work in collaboration with the Wycliffe Bible Translators in providing portions of the Bible in the languages of the people with whom it works 'to give them the spiritual stamina to withstand the changes of the invading modern world.'[9] So far they have studied, analyzed and documented more than 1,200 languages out of a total of 6417 (?) surviving though fast dying languages of the world. In Nepal, they have published similar materials in more than 30 marginalised languages, including the *New Testament* in several minority languages of Nepal. At a point in our social history when the whole society and the field of the Social Sciences are in ferment, it is consoling to have at least some God-fearing linguists round the corner. The Hindu seers intending to transform the whole world into Aryans or 'the nobility',[10] have yet to translate the *Rgveda* into Nepali,

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7 *Panchayat Darpan*, Vol V, No 15, p. 99.

8 See Richard Hugoniot, 'Ten-Year Report of the SIL 1966-1976', submitted to the Vice-Chancellor S.B. Shakya, pp. 30-34.

9 Wares, 1979, p. vi.

10 *The Rgveda*, X:65: *Rica* v-vi.

and the day when one can read it in Hayu or even Tamang language is likely to dawn only when the Himalayas had all melted down the Bay of Bengal due to greenhouse effects of overheated linguistic sciences in Nepal.

Nor do I lament that the Missionary Schools and Hospitals are better managed and providing better services than the public ones funded by taxpayers' money. If the Christian population of Nepal has increased from 458 in 1961 to 101,976 in 2001, mostly among such linguistic communities as Tamang, Rai, and Magar—all suffering under the yoke of Hindu high-caste hegemony, no one should be taken aback.

Prior to the arrival of Dr Hale and Dr Davies few knew proper linguistics in TU. At least, I did not know any, except attending two courses in 1963-65 at the School of English in the University of Leeds. At that School, Charles L. Barber, Peter Strevens, Michael Gregory and John Spencer gave us courses on Contemporary English and Stylistics. In the UK, it was the first University to found a Chair in Contemporary English. I was then more infatuated with the lectures and tutorials of Arnold Kettle, my tutor A. Norman Jeffares, Douglas Grant, Douglas Jefferson, and the poet Christopher Hill. What linguistics I did then was for me too little and too late. In 1969, Dr Hale gave us a memorable 'First Course in Transformational Syntax', probably a modified version of the one he had delivered at Grand Forks, North Dakota University. In the very first lecture he delivered, he held up in the air, a copy of Chomsky and Halle's *The Sound Pattern of English* (1968), like Moses holding the flaming tablet inscribed by Jehovah, containing the full text of the Ten Commandments! Personally, that was my first exposure to hard core linguistics. My lineage is, therefore, somewhat mixed and my loyalty divided as I had, nearly at the same time in September 1969, attended a five-week course in Applied Linguistics given by Dr Alan Davies and two British Council ELT Experts. With this dubious and feeble academic background, I went to Edinburgh totally as a neophyte. Fortunately, I met ripe elderly Indian English Professors such as A. Nagarajan from Poona University doing the same initial Diploma in Applied Linguistics as I did in my first nine months. In those first nine months, I took the maximum benefits by attending all possible lectures in Semantics and General Linguistics. In the words of Noam Chomsky, the Department of Linguistics at Edinburgh was 'by far the best in the country' with luminaries such as John Lyons, David Abercrombie, S. Pit Corder, Keith

Brown, Gillian Brown, Henry Widdowson, Keith Mitchell, Ruth Clarke, Elizabeth Ingram, Clive Criper, James P. Thorne, Roger Asher and James Miller etc. In fact, students from European universities crossed the English Channel during weekends to attend the lectures in Theoretical and General Linguistics and Semantics, particularly by John Lyons and on phonetics by John Laver. It was an exciting though mercilessly grinding regime for me to complete a proper linguistic thesis dead on the dot. It was, indeed, a great surprise for me to learn that the Doctoral Committee chaired by Johan M Sinclair of Birmingham University wrote the following evaluation on my thesis:

> Mr Malla came here as essentially a literary scholar and his knowledge of theoretical linguistics was fairly elementary. He has now acquired a wide ranging knowledge of linguistics and has established its relationship to style study. Mr Malla was an outstanding student. He was not only extremely industrious, having got through a prodigious amount of reading during his three years here, but also highly discriminating, processing what he read in such a way as to draw out its theoretical significance and practical implication. His thesis was an admirable piece of work and in recommending its acceptance for the award of a PhD the examiners expressed the view that it showed critical intelligence of a high order.[11]

However, when I returned home I had absolutely no political or administrative ambitions at all, nor do I have any now or ever before. If I had any, I would not have been standing here, but striding the corridors of unquestioned power, because among my students were the present King Gyanendra (1967-69), his younger brother Prince Dhirendra (1969-70), and their aunt, Princess Princep Shaha (1965-67). An influential member of the Royalty, Kumar Khadga Bikram Shaha, the Executive Director of CNAS (1984-1990) was a friend and colleague for more than a decade. My sole hope has always been to teach, research and publish in the field in which I had specialised. This was only what I hoped, what destiny had in store for me was, however, quite a different story. For one thing, in the early 1970s in our University Library, there were neither

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11 David Waterhouse, quoting from the Evaluation Report, Letter to the Vice-Chancellor, TU, dated 26 February, 1974.

books nor journals in Linguistics worth reading. So it did not take long for my Linguistics to get fossilised because it was by far one of the most dynamic of the Human Sciences. During my blessed days of bachelorhood, I could afford to subscribe to *Style* or *Journal of Linguistics*, but as soon as I married (1975) and became a parent (1976), I could afford neither.

However, as was usual with most overseas-educated Nepalis, the late noble King Birendra, granted me an unexpected audience and encouraged me to write a book on 'where we have gone wrong' and pursue the critique of T.D. Allmann—a columnist in *The Guardian* in the early 1970s who contributed critical pieces on Nepal such as 'Loneliness of an Autocrat' and so on. 'We need critics such as he to show us where we need some more work to do', the King said to me. He appreciated *Nepal in Perspective* (1973), and took several copies of it in his foreign tours as presents, maybe to show the receiving dignitaries how the political system was 'responsive' to the intelligentsia, or maybe it was the least offensive or rightist of the books to come out of Nepal in the early 1970s, as Alexander W. Macdonald put it, or it was a real *cri de coeur* of Nepal, as the late British sociologist, Ernest Gellner put it.[12] It is a book that I had not even read the proofs of, nor 'edited' in the copy-editor's sense of the word because when it came out in June 1973, I was in the thick of my thesis-writing.

There is hardly any doubt that the late King wanted to enlist the support of the best talents available in Nepal to serve the nation in the utmost capacity they could. If one cares to visit the Office of the former Ombudsman at the extended quarters of the Royal Palace, one could still see the names of *all* the top and up-and-coming Nepali intellectuals of the early 1970s and 1980s. You name him, and he was there. The leading intellectuals and academics have had the same love-hate relationship with the powers that be then, as they still have now in all the open societies. However, the King had not expected from me yet another sycophantic apologia for 'The First Five Years' of his rule, and before I could complete what I had promised him, he appointed me to a different and more academically consequential role.

Following the induction of Dr Mohan Man Saiju to the National Planning Commission in early September 1977, I was offered the post of the

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12 *Encounter*, October 1978, p. 68.

Rector of Tribhuvan University. I had declined it twice. But the pressure on me was so great and mounting, particularly from the Education Minister, one time my collaborator, Pashupati Shumsher J.B. Rana, that finally I had to give in and accept it two months later. I worked only for 22 months in a tenure of 3 years. Following a major student unrest the whole cabinet, including the Minister of Education (i.e., Pro-chancellor of TU), resigned *en mass*, apparently to salvage the political system on fire. I resigned from the post on August 22, 1979, together with the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar. During those 22 months, I could not do much, either for my parent Department, which I had headed for less than two years after Dr Purcell left, or for Linguistics. However, in collaboration with the Vice-Chancellor Jagat Mohan Adhikary, we set aside a fund of NRs 20 million, in a fixed deposit to create a Faculty Development Fund through interests earned on it so that every year the University could send at least two Faculty members on full salary plus doctoral fellowships in a leading Indian University to do a PhD. It was under this scheme that Yogendra Yadav, Madhav Pokherel, Shanti Basnyet, Shree Krishna Yadav, Sunder Krishna Joshi, and Novel K. Rai, among others, went to the Deccan College, University of Poona/Central Institute of English and Indian Languages, Hyderabad. I was instrumental in sending Abhi Subedi, a former Head and Professor of English to Edinburgh University. It was on my recommendation that Jyoti Tuladhar and Jayaraj Acharya went to do a PhD from Georgetown University. Shreedhar Lohani was all set to go to Australia on a ten-month Postgraduate Diploma Course in ELT. I persuaded him not to do so but wait a little while for a better opportunity, which he got later on. He got into Essex University to do an MSc in Linguistics, and Ananda Shrestha went to do the ELT course in Australia.

Dr Davies left Kathmandu in September 1971, partly because he, like everyone of us following him, found Kirtipur too inflammable a seat. Consequently, Yugeswar P. Varma, who was working under Dr Davies on a PhD on the English Language Press in Nepal, was left in a lurch. He had, however, submitted his thesis in July 1974, completed under Dr Purcell. But he was having serious difficulties with his thesis, and was nearly on the verge of a breakdown. As an understanding colleague, I had to work as a bridge between him and his examiners. Similar was the case of my good colleagues, Tej R. Kansakar and Chudamani Bandhu—both stranded in the middle of their PhD projects because they had

registered for the PhD degree under the supervision of Dr Austin Hale. Although they had had a number of chances for exposure to theory and method in Thailand and the USA under the Linguistic Institute, or in the numerous workshops conducted by the SIL in Kathmandu, at least till the end of 1977 neither had been able to do full justice to their topic. I sent both of them to India, particularly to Poona, to consult with appropriate experts. I also examined and approved their theses. But there were only two candidates who directly registered with me for PhD in English Linguistics in January 1977: Rameswar P. Adhikary and Ananda P. Shrestha. Adhikary got the Faculty Fellowships on my recommendation (Rs 500 per month for two years plus leave with pay), but neither persisted for long. Within five years, Rameswar Adhikary changed his thesis topic, 'Tense and Aspect in Nepali and English' twice. Finally, one fine morning he gave up Linguistics in despair, and requested me to allow him to change the topic to a literary one, and I formally approved his request on 7 August 1985, within a year, on August 1, 1986, he got a PhD on a single novel by Emily Bronte! Ananda Shrestha never showed up for long.

Since 1980, year after year, the Linguistic Society of Nepal continued to pass pious resolution, pleading the University to establish a Department of Linguistics. It did not happen till 1996 for too many reasons. Even after the advent of multi-party parliamentary democracy in Nepal, there is a deep distrust of Linguistics in general and minority languages in particular. May I give you only the most brilliant examples? The Public Service Commission, in a revised curriculum for candidates contesting for Gazetted Class III Officers, dropped a compulsory Nepali language paper in 1992. A section of hardliners went to the Supreme Court and succeeded in compelling the PSC to retain Nepali. No one knows about its relevance for those graduates who had already had 15 full years of compulsory Nepali. Similarly, when a National Education Commission was set up in July 1992, a hue and cry was made to make Sanskrit compulsory from Grade I-X. As many as 75 MPs signed a petition to the Commission urging it to do so. Among the signatories were, not only the Rightists, but also noted Marxists such as Madan Bhandari, Lila Mani Pokharel, Siddhilal Simha, and Sahana Pradhan!

The animosity towards minority languages and cultures is so strong in our society that when the Dhanusha District Committee, Janakpur Municipality, and the Kathmandu Metropolis decided to use, together

with the national language Nepali, the languages spoken by the majority of residents in the locality, on June 1, 1999 the Supreme Court issued an Interim Order and quashed the local body decisions. Instead of denouncing these decisions, in a recent interview to *Kantipur* Nepali-language daily,[13] the architect of the present *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1991*, Mr Visvanath Upadhaya, rejected outright the claims of the minority languages for recognition in public domain as 'absurd *since* there are as many as 42 such insignificant ones and even the total public revenue will not be adequate for the Government Offices and the Courts of Justice in Nepal if they had to publish their notices, statutes, laws, and bills in all the 42 languages of Nepal!.' It is a pity that no one has so far written any letter to the Editor of *Kantipur*, asking the formidable Constitutional expert on why his artefact is today in such a deep coma, nor has any one asked him on how much of public revenue had already been wasted in teaching Nepali, Sanskrit, and of course English as a compulsory language in a system of education devised since at least 1912 Anno Domini. Although Nepali is taught as a compulsory language from Grade I, the Government has not been able to bring out a single linguistically defensible textbook for Grade I in the last 92 years! Has anyone calculated the public resources wasted in the name of Compulsory Nepali, Compulsory English, and of course, Compulsory Sanskrit, in the world's only surviving Hindu Kingdom? May we suggest Honourable Upadhyaya to do that and, if he has no time, at least to peruse the UNESCO's *Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2002) or UNDP's *Human Development Report, 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World* (2004).

I do not really know where all the very first four linguists, trained in 1973-74 by the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, have disappeared; at least two of them are not traceable. Among the other two, Geeta Khadga *nee* Chand has crossed the floor and landed up by writing a PhD on Walt Whitman's tantric spiritual journey. Yet another lady, Indira Shrestha, is now running a NGO—something mysteriously called Stri-Shakti. Some of the erstwhile US-trained linguists are now occupying the lucrative Headmaster's Chair in Higher Secondary Schools. At one point, I too thought of permanently dropping out and moonlighting in such green pastures. On returning to my parent Eng-

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13 *Kantipur*, 8 November, 2004.

lish Department in January 1996, I found myself not too welcome and homeless because even an ordinary room where I used to work earlier was *deliberately* converted into a junkyard of rejected furniture.

The ultimate apocalyptic moments of my academic life were the two English Subject Committee meetings held on November 1998, a session of an hour and a half and another held on March 1999. The second one lasted exactly 45 minutes, to frame and finalise approximately 46 Papers in the Graduate Department of English where the key actors were bent upon, not only heavily laden courses on literary genres, but also vast and intractable courses on Non-Western Literature, Post-Structuralist Theories, and Post-Colonial Theories, not to speak of courses on Inter-Arts Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Creative Writing, History of Modern Ideas, and Rhetoric. I wonder why they left out the more important Gay Studies, so popular these days in the American Universities! When I insisted that most of our graduates finally end up as English language lecturers, either in private campuses or in Higher Secondary Schools, and that we should give them adequate knowledge of the language and language teaching pedagogy relevant to their world of work, my departmental colleagues brushed aside my concern. They retorted by saying that we must keep up with 'the world trends'. Naturally, our graduate programmes are modelled on the graduate English Studies programmes of Brown University or Michigan University. They all thought that a sound knowledge of ELT concepts, methods and pedagogy was at best irrelevant to their academic project or mission. So they succeeded in relegating the ELT to a marginal half a paper with 75 learning hours out of 1500—one among 13 electives. The Department delivers courses on American Poetry, Fiction, American Critical Theories, mostly taken care of by ill-prepared fresh M.A.s hired on part-time basis, struggling to lecture to a class of 200 students per shift in half-understood jargons of Continental Semiotics at Rs 150 per lecture. Yet the printed curriculum, that looks more like a publisher's marketing catalogue than a graduate programme, claims, 'The goal of English Studies, broadly defined, would be to produce competent teachers of English, but more importantly, intellectuals.'[14] Similarly, the current undergraduate English courses are totally confused in their objectives: no one teaches a history of ideas or literary genre or movements, nor schools

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14 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 1999, p. 1.

in an ELT course, nor do we ask the learners, 'What is Sylvia Plath's view of Death?' in a proper language course. The current courses of English at the Bachelor's as well as at the Master's level reflect neither *the present language abilities* nor *the future language needs* of Nepali students in Tribhuvan University.

I am not surprised that such University Departments were set on occasional fire by angry and frustrated students who could not make anything out of what was being delivered in a crowd. Nor am I surprised that neither Tej R. Kansakar's excellent textbook on *English Phonetics for Nepali Students* (1998), nor Yogendra Yadav were in person welcome here. Both were, therefore, more than willing to quit the Central Department of English at the earliest. As soon as the Department of Linguistics was in the offing, set in motion by Nirmal Man Tuladhar and his team, by submitting a Memorandum (dated January 3, 1993) to the Rector, the literary scholars of the English Department rose in defiance, if not in disguised arms. When the Rector sought their seasoned wisdom on the proposed Linguistics curriculum, the Head of the 'Central Department' of English wrote the following remark, truly worthy of inscribing in gold, *'as the Memorandum impinges upon the sovereign rights of other Departments to frame their own curriculum, the right to teach it and to consolidate the programme, the Rector should reconsider the proposal.'* (M.P. Lohani, 27 May 1993). This was the last kick of the receding generation to foil our hopes and aspirations to set up a separate Department of Linguistics in Tribhuvan University. At the foot of that letter was the following note in red ink by T.R. Kansakar, dated September 12, 1993:

> Our proposal on the Department of Linguistics is still lying at the Rector's Office and no action has been taken. Nirmal and I have been trying to push this matter and the responses to our inquiries are always vague and indefinite. We shall appreciate it very much if *YOU* can suggest any means to expedite a decision at the earliest. (Signed T.R. Kansakar)

A leading 'pink' English poet of the 1930s, Louis MacNiece, once described the Nobel Laureate William Butler Yeats as 'a budding Fascist'. Durga Bhandari, my erstwhile classmate and colleague, wrote a thesis on the plays of W.B. Yeats at Jabbelpore University, Madhya Pradesh, India. In a talk he gave at the Goethe Institute on March 25, 1985 on 'The Contemporary Intellectual Climate in Nepal' he quoted me saying, 'an

articulate conscience is an expensive thing in Nepal' to which he added an opaque caveat, 'I agree with Dr K.P. Malla. I hope he does not mean bigotry and orthodoxy by intellectual honesty.' How wonderful are his diction and phrasing, particularly when he lashes out at lesser humans, such as me. Wisdom, however, dawns at odd places, such as in a bathtub, under a bow tree, or in the dark recesses of the tropical Indian forest. One such great moment of philosophical enlightenment must have dawned upon Durga Bhandari, a political appointee as Executive Director of CNAS. He delivered a Welcome Address to the Nepali and expatriate Social Anthropologists, assembled at the Vajra Hotel, Kathmandu on September 7-14, 1992, to deliberate on the nature of Nepali society. From his newly established credentials and pedestal as the first 'democratic Executive Director'—for he branded us all as well as his own CNAS colleagues as 'underground Mafia of former *Mandales*' drenched in unaccountable corruption—he has the following memorable sermon to preach to a highly qualified audience of Social Scientists:

> Most studies done so far have been perfunctory and lacking in imaginative understanding of the relationship between the ideal and the reality that *should* inform the anthropology of Nepal. Native or foreign investigators, whether in the name of anthropology or some other discipline, *should* keep in the forefront of their minds a *centripetal* rather than a *centrifugal attitude* in investigating an essentially syncretic social system in Nepal.[15]

Only Durga Bhandari would, of course, know the dividing line between the two 'attitudes' in Social Anthropology. Yet, are these words not uncannily reminiscent of, or shall we say a brilliant paraphrase of the former Vice-Chancellor, Sardar Rudra Raj Pandey's 'Directives to the Boards of Studies' in the dark old days of Panchayat regime?

The behind-the-scene manoeuvres of the anti-Linguistics lobby in the University continued to be so active and decisive till 1996 that it was only on August 2nd 1996, during the tenure of Vice-Chancellor Kamal K. Joshi, that the Department was formally established following the approval of the Faculty Board and the Academic Council. With the co-operation, moral and intellectual support of colleagues such as Yogendra Yadav, T.R. Kansakar, Madhav Pokharel, Subhadra Subba, Ramawatar

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15 Bhandari, 1994, pp. vii-viii.

Yadav, Sri Krishna Yadav, Geeta Khadga, Ballav Mani Dahal, and of course, Nirmal Man Tuladhar, Dr Chudamani Bandhu finally got through the anguish of the birth-pangs of the Department of Linguistics. Most of us taught gladly on a near-honorary basis because we were paid a wage of Rs 75 per lecture.

Coinciding with his 65th birthday, on August 4, 2002, a language Department in Patan held a small unassuming reception in honour of Dr Austin Hale, the Guru of all of us. He gave a deeply touching and candid 'self-image' or an appraisal of his academic career by confessing that he was 'a slow learner and the process of learning does not end as long as one is willing to do so.' Since he first came to Nepal in 1968, he has been trying to work on Tibeto-Burman linguistics in general and the Newar language in particular, collaborating now with Thakur Lal Manandhar, or Iswarananda Shresthacharya, or with Tej Ratna Kansakar, Kedar P. Shrestha, and Jyoti Tuladhar. He is yet wondering what is the proper representation of a language. He thinks that a language like Newari is fairly easy to learn but too difficult to analyse and even more difficult to describe, not because it has a great deal of inflection but because it has far more complexities as soon as one looks at texts and the pragmatics of discourse. When he worked with the Toolbox Software on interlinear translated texts, hundreds of eccentric morphemes showed up, not exactly knowing what to do with them. Dr Hale concluded with a cathartic statement: 'TG is *not* helpful in Nepal. One has of necessity to go in for other views'. For me it sounded like we were once again back to square one. For those of us who have been through a rough passage, plodding through *Syntactic Structures*, the *Aspects* (1965), Extended Standard Theory (1971), Revised Extended Standard Theory (1980), Theory of Government and Binding, the Minimalist Program and after, it is like standing by a Black Hole.

In the end, continuity and perpetual change are all there are to any intellectual and academic discipline. 'Science,' said the great Italian Orientalist, Guiseppe Tucci (1894-1984) 'is perpetual revision'. What my colleagues working so hard and committed to running the Linguistic Society of Nepal, as well as its organ, *Nepalese Linguistics*, for the last quarter of a century have achieved is precisely this continuity and change in a collective effort. The LSN is one of the few learned and academic societies in Nepal that has managed to survive where the unfittest tend to survive and prosper at the cost the fittest. 'Encourage the youth and

the nation will prosper,' said the wise American ṛṣi, Ralph Waldo Emerson. I just wish to add 'train the younger colleagues and the Discipline will take roots and flourish.' Nepal, with well over 534 languages spoken within a landscape of 1,47,181 sq kilometres is, indeed, a wonderful laboratory for aspiring but well-trained linguists with a notebook and a tape recorder in hand. If we can only build up the infrastructure, keen interest and commitment to the Discipline can be stirred up. Or, I have got it all wrong, it may be the other way round. Open up the avenues of exposure and contacts, for Linguistics, like all Social Sciences, does not have any artificial limits or borders.

Our hope for the future is as bright as that of Dr Yogendra Yadav, who will leave behind him, not only a trail of tangible and substantial academic achievements, but also a generation of academically committed and theoretically sound younger colleagues who are both able and willing to take over from him once he retires. That alone would justify our protracted struggle against hostile political, cultural and academic forces.

The rate of attrition in our ranks among linguists, as I have shown, cannot be minimised. I do not wish to see yet another well-trained linguist emerging as a tantric scholar or an esoteric lit. crit. languishing in the blazing fire of Kirtipur which tends to flare up now and then. These occasional fire-worships tend to inspire disquieting loose sallies of the mind, churning out unreadable political tracts closely vying with Noam Chomsky's *Class Warfare* (1998).

In the past four decades of my academic career, spanning from 1959-1999, I have gladly worked and cooperated with the late King, every one of his Education Ministers, TU Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Registrars, Deans, Heads of Department , Directors, and Professors—irrespective of their political belief or personal creed. My only commitment has been to my work in hand and doing it as well as I should or could do. During the troubled initial years of his rule, I had also worked in the Royal Palace for the late King Birendra, (September 1974-October 1975), the dispenser of a multiparty parliamentary constitution, which all of us are now tearing into pieces. It has never mattered to me what religion anyone follows, what political creed he is committed to and what his personal beliefs are—as long as he wanted to do something constructive and positive for the education system of the country.

The late King tried to change both the structure and the content of education in a society where manual labour has been considered a vile occupation *(hīna karma)*, for at least two thousand years. Just peruse through the list of the so-called śūdras in the *Manusmṛti*. All the sections of society who possess some skill and technology are classed as lowly helots. There is no wonder if in our society vocational schools and trade schools, which the late King wished to promote, did not carry such social prestige as the so-called 'Liberal Education.' The late King may have committed many mistakes during his 28-year rule, because he took over in 1972 when he was only 27, but he never wanted to prevent the Nepali people from being better and more educated. He wanted to see his people have at least minimum education for the maximum number, *not* maximum education for a minimum number. The NESP was never designed to prevent the Nepali youth from getting access to the best higher education that Nepal can afford. It merely set an *explicit target* of enrolling 19 percent of total secondary enrolment to higher education out of which 60 percent would be in General or Liberal Education and 40 percent in Technical Education.

No university on earth enrols all the applicants who line up at their doors. In actual fact, 30-35 percent of Secondary enrolment or 90-96 percent of SLCs got into TU campuses in the 1970s to 1990s. Compare these figures with Sri Lanka, where only six percent of GCE graduates get into its universities. Compare these with the figures from Japan where 22 percent of 12-year school graduates get into public universities; or, with the figures from the UK where only 18 percent of the A-level GCEs ever go to a university. In the USA, on the other hand, not every senior high school graduate goes to university. Less than 45 percent of the 18-22 year old population get to universities, only after maintaining an acceptable SAT or GMAT scores. In its latest Convocation Ceremony, TU awarded 15,909 degrees to its graduates. With a tottering economy and a shrinking and demoralised private sector, where will our graduates go? Can they withstand the competitive trade regime of the global market economy with a ten year high school and three-year degree programme? It was King Birendra who, for the first time in our history, made Primary Education (Grades I-V) free in March 1976. The National Education System Plan was his brain child. In 1975 as well as in 1979 it was made a direct political target and unfortunate casualty by restive but ill-informed political parties to enlist the support of equally misin-

formed students who were won over by cheap slogans such as 'free higher education for all.' We are now watching the dramatic consequences. Soon, with 11 more universities to come we may very well have 'free PhDs'.

Gentlemen and ladies, tell me if higher education is 'free' (no tuition fees and no entrance tests, so to say) in any part of the world, including in Mao's China. In April 2000, we visited Peking University. It was in the thick of 'market socialist economy' as Professor Wei-fang Min, a Stanford-educated economist, also Peking University's Vice-Chancellor, explained to us. In 1990, it initiated a complete reform programme, by charging students 5 percent of operation cost as tuition fee. By 1998, it had increased to 22 percent and their target is to reach a benchmark of 30 percent so that Peking University could be 'the Silicon Valley of the Socialist World.' The place where we sojourned was an excellent hotel, Zi Yuan, run efficiently on a competitive commercial basis by Peking University.

In Nepal, the Government did not 'nationalise or centralise' all schools and colleges under the NESP; it merely sought to consolidate the existing ones so that they could deliver an education that is relevant to social needs and so that they deliver programmes of an acceptable quality. The Government had merely agreed to pay 50 percent of operational expenses of General Institutes, including those of the community colleges and schools and 100 percent salary of Technical Institutes. *The Government did not take over the management or the financing of higher education.* This was later on amended in late 1976 and the Government had, after tough negotiations, agreed to give teachers' salary in all the faculties as grants-in-aid, because the scheme of 'education toll' did not work. This was deliberately politicised by discontented politicians as an 'authoritarian step.' Through the *Education Act of 1971* or *TU Act of 1972*, all that the Government did was to bring the then Government Colleges (6 or 7 in all) *and* community colleges (69 in all) under the single academic and administrative umbrella of TU. This is far from what one understands by 'nationalisation'. This was a necessary step to stop the proliferation of ill-equipped 'private colleges' all over the kingdom which was condemned outright by TU's own Academic Council in 1969—a tide which it was totally unable to stem then or now. Both the *Acts* were in line with the recommendations of the National Educational Planning Commission (1954-56), All Round Education Commit-

tee (1961-62), and above all, the recommendations of the UNESCO Education Mission, 1962.

My personal commitment to the NESP was, however, limited and conditional. I was rushed in my Hawaiian slippers and bush shirt to the Royal Palace to take an oath of secrecy, administered by Honourable Chief Justice Ratna Bahadur Bista on September 27, 1974. I went to replace Suresh Raj Sharma, who had been looking after Higher Education, because he left for the University of London to do a PhD. When one of the team members approached me I declined as usual. But next time I was literally hijacked from the construction works going on in my old house. By that time the exercise and review of the NESP were already five months old, led by Dr Mohammad Mohsin, the current Government spokesman and Minister of Information. Both the NESP and its mid-term review were already in the doldrums when I was rushed into the Royal Palace to salvage them. The recommendations made by the team are, however, a transparent and public document available in print. Both the Plan and the review were vilified on purpose, without anyone ever going through either of them. That it was not a diabolical document inscribed by some Satanic hand to control or to terrorise the university students or their teachers will be evident if one cares to read its full text or its Mid-Term or the Full-Term Evaluation and subsequent reforms. We are now witnessing the drama of 'free higher education'. As an old African saying goes, 'free medicine is no medicine.' This is all the more true as Nepal is preparing to enter the world market.

Of course, every educational plan is a political project with or without a hidden agenda trying to legitimise some forms of knowledge as more socially acceptable than others. Neither the NESP, nor the Education Commission headed by Sardar Rudra Raj Pandey in 1954-56, nor the 15-member 'Democratic' Commission (1992) headed by Dr T.N. Upraity, much less the Left-Right-Centre studded 35 member jumbo High-Level Education Commission (1994), led by the erstwhile left-leaning royalist B.M. Dahal, was free from political preoccupations. Each had explicit or implicit political axes to grind. That is why very few of their recommendations were implemented, including the *Higher Secondary Education Act, 1989*—to which all Governments, Left or Right, were formally committed, but none took any seriously. Consequently, TU is now in a state of suspended political animation like a mixed container of Higher Secondary School at the bottom half of its torso and an un-

wieldy teaching college at the top, with hardly any research activity anywhere.

Any theory is dangerous, particularly when you have only one, and think of it as the final word. Such was Durga Bhandari's theory, elaborated so eloquently in the following classic lines of his:

> Any relaxation in the powers of the King may spell a danger for the country. Monarchy or the monarch-controlled democracy is an indispensable need for an indefinite time—until the people can be educated to be responsible citizens and individuals. The institution of monarchy has always and everywhere been an antidote to political chaos...Democracy of any sort is not a perfectly suitable form of government in this country where a vast proportion of people, *having been born and lived in the capital of the kingdom,* do not know the basic art of speaking, defecating, blowing their nose, and managing their assigned business, let alone the habits of developing intellectual culture and moral quality. And *democracy, I repeat, is not a fit system for the culturally primitive people*. People find it hard to believe in any leader other than the King. The best way to serve the country is, therefore, to obey the noble wish of His Majesty.[16]

If, to an intellectual aristocrat such as Durga Bhandari or his political cronies, we now sound like 'bigots' or '*Mandale* philistines' or a Mafia, this is all very understandable. (Read, for instance, the pieces sponsored by him in *Parivesh*, a Nepali-language daily published in Kathmandu, edited by Kishore Kunwar, dated May 23, 1990, or June 8, 1990). At least once a year, he should go back to his roots, that is, to Doti district and find out for himself how his kinsmen live.

'Keep your mind a thoroughfare,' wrote John Keats—one of the greatest English Romantic poets of the early 19th century—in a letter to his brother George. I have always done so since I learnt to think. My only prayer to Lord Almighty is, 'Lead me unto the Light,' though not too close to current conflagration yet! For at 69, I think it is too early for me to be pulverised mercilessly to a single element or theory—from ashes unto ashes, as it were. I obviously have a lot to learn, some more Linguistics, and then culture and, if I can, manners!

Thank you so much for bearing with me for this wonderful session.

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16 Bhandari, 1983, pp. 14-21.

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4

Hard Plan in a Soft State

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper

—T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men* (1925)

This paper attempts to examine the fate of a hard plan in a soft State. Nepal is one of the few countries in the Third World which attempted to change both the content and the structure of education at one stroke. However, the plan was aborted in the middle of the stream. Why it was done so is of no small interest to educational planners at home and abroad.

The late King Mahendra, the architect of Nepal's partyless Panchayat system, made a surprise visit to a university teachers' meet in winter 1970 and delivered an unexpected paper. The King expressed his dissatisfaction at the transplanted system of education which produced 'students who seek no other goal but politics of all kinds, of "isms" and ideologies', or 'students who seek no other goal but a job in the establishment.' He admonished the university teachers 'to re-examine our educational strategy with a view of improving the existing system, step by step, to achieve one supreme goal common to all—that is, to create stability, order, peace and above all national solidarity:

i. by depoliticising the educational system;
ii. by introducing trade as a compulsory subject in all schools;

iii. by emphasising quality and excellence;
iv. by improving the existing curricula and the examination system;
v. by reorienting the entire educational framework to meet the demands of the kingdom, and
vi. by creating an educational environment where ideas of loyalty to the Crown, the country, and the Panchayat system can grow with greatest effect.'

A little earlier than King Mahendra's surprise visit to the university teachers' meet, a 22-page mimeographed draft in English was made available to the members of Tribhuvan University Planning Committee for the reaction of its members. On September 11, 1969, a meeting was held in Singha Durbar under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education, where the participants expressed their mixed reactions. I for one submitted my reactions in writing and published some of these reactions. Here is a part: 'Howsoever glibly we may talk about the urgency of change in the education system we have nearly always acted believing in the efficacy of cure rather than of prevention. We have nearly always compromised and appeased rather than faced the problem. It is by pursuing the policy of appeasement to contingencies that education in Nepal has by now come to be the most institutionalized of illogic'.[1]

The 22-page mimeograph draft was the seminal core of what was later on to become Nepal's ill-fated National Educational System Plan 1971-1976 (NESP). A task force was formed in the Royal Palace under the direct supervision of Crown Prince Birendra in the winter of 1970. When the task force had a fuller draft of the plan ready it was circulated for reaction among a cross-section of Nepalis. A great deal of discussion was encouraged. But once the plan was approved not much frontal criticism of the plan was tolerated. Under the full royal patronage of the late King Mahendra and the personal supervision of Crown Prince Birendra the plan was launched in July 1971. After his accession to the throne of Nepal, King Birendra's address to the 20th Session of the Rastriya Panchayat made it clear that 'My government will implement the plan with application and firmness'. A year later, the plan was implemented in higher education. The royal shield around the plan was both its strength and weakness.

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1 Malla, 1969.

Hardly a month later, the university students went on strike in support of demands for reforms, educational as well as political. Among other things, their demands included the release of the four elected members of the Rastriya Panchayat, including a former Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa. By a stroke of historical coincidence, Thapa is now the Prime Minister under whose auspices the NESP has been gracefully dismantled. For several years, the 1972 August strike was one of the biggest ones, and the Nepali police used batons and canes to disperse hundreds of university students who tried to march through the streets of Kathmandu on August 16, 1972. Two years later, in April 1974, another student strike paralyzed the university for nearly five months. But this time the government and the university, by working in unison, succeeded in effectively crushing the student unrest. All the administrative-educational authorities they had at their disposal were used to do so. This created a relatively prolonged, though deceptive, lull before the final storm in the university.

On April 6, 1979, the Nepali police clashed with a minor student demonstration marching towards the Pakistan Embassy in Kathmandu to hand in a protest note against the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Although it all began as a mundane student-police confrontation, it was more than that. The clash was a result of a form of student unrest which suddenly spread like simmering fire. The 80 odd campuses of the kingdom's only university were disturbed, one after another. Schools followed the rebellious trail. The unrest soon gained momentum all over the kingdom, crippling many a sector of public life. Strikes, lockouts, and violent clashes with the police erupted in all the major towns of Nepal.

A month later, on May 2, 1979, a Royal Commission was announced to investigate the grievances of the striking students and police excesses. Instead of diffusing the situation, the Royal Commission further complicated it. Soon it was painfully clear that the device failed to let the steam out of the explosive situation. Three weeks later, on May 23, 1979, a massive demonstration ended up by setting two public buildings on fire in the heart of Kathmandu. The police could not cope with the angry crowd; the Royal Army was ordered to move in. Early next morning, 34-year-old King Birendra took the kingdom by surprise by promising to hold a national referendum to choose the political system the nation wanted.

On May 20, 1979, just four days before the King announced his decision to hold the national referendum, the Royal Commission had ordered both Tribhuvan University and the Ministry of Education to fulfil all the demands of the striking students. Thus, for all intents and purposes, Nepal's National Educational System Plan was finally dismantled and withdrawn after less than seven years of increasingly compromised implementation. The Royal Commission was only a face-saving device—a hapless body that came to preside over the final liquidation of the plan.

For those who are interested in more serious literature there are three crucial studies on the implementation of the NESP—exhaustive studies which were conducted at the official level: the Mid-term Evaluation Report (1975), the Full-Term Evaluation Report (1979), and the University Organization: A Study Report (1980). The present paper is only a tailpiece which attempts to investigate why the plan finally collapsed.

A university does not operate in a social or political vacuum. Of all the institutions of modernisation in traditional societies, a university is, perhaps, one of the most critical and subversive one—subversive because it disseminates ideas, ideals, concept and attitudes which may not always be conducive to the established order of things. The Rana Prime Minister, Chandra Shumsher, was reported to have cried as he laid the foundation of Tri-Chandra College, Nepal's first western-style institution of higher education, in 1918, saying, 'This is our graveyard'. It is, indeed, a cruel irony of the NESP that the plan which intended to depoliticise the education system by creating citizens who were loyal to the Crown, the country, and the Panchayat System—after nearly a decade of heavy financial investment—produced a generation of young men who turned out to be most vocal critics of the status quo.

Tribhuvan University was incorporated in 1959. The late King Mahendra took over in December 1960 by dismissing an elected government and parliament formed under the provisions of the 1959 Constitution of Nepal granted by the King himself. The 18-month old elected government of the Nepali Congress led by B. P. Koirala was deposed by King Mahendra by labelling a dozen or so serious charges against it. Within a year of the royal takeover, the King granted a constitution modelled on a native version of basic democracy. Though political parties were banned immediately after the take-over, the 1962 constitution was not yet a 'partyless' one. It was only in 1967 that the

constitution was amended to make the polity a 'partyless Panchayat democracy'.

At the same time, the National Legislature, elected indirectly by restricted electoral colleges, claimed that the partyless Panchayat democracy was 'without any alternative for Nepal'. In the same year, King Mahendra also announced an outfit called 'Back to the Village National Campaign'. King Mahendra went a little out of the way for a monarch to write a terse exposition of the underlying philosophy of the system and got it printed in his own name under the caption, 'The Kingdom of Heaven and the Soul'.[2] It concluded with the traditional Hindu benediction for the welfare of the cow, the Brahmin, and the common man. Whether the late King's Kingdom of Heaven did arrive for the Brahmin or the cow is unverifiable, but it has failed to arrive for the common man.

Almost every one of the charges which the late King laid against the 18-month old elected Nepali Congress government has been laid in the past two decades, with no qualms of public conscience, at the doors of any or every one of the governments which stayed in power by royal favour. After all, only four trusted prime ministers—Dr Tulsi Giri, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Kirtinidhi Bista and Nagendra Prasad Rijal—have shared the two partyless decades among them, revolving in turn in the musical chair of power. Except for Rijal, all the royal favourites had been premiers more than once.

Although for two decades the polity made an untiring claim to dynamism, vested interests got entrenched in both politics and the bureaucracy, succumbing to all the known syndromes of a soft State. Although from outside things looked agreeably functional, the state of the nation was like that of a room with an active fireplace but no chimney. Public anger, so long suppressed, found a sudden and spontaneous articulation in the 1979 unrest. It erupted from the education sector because it was at once the most vulnerable and organised sector of public life. Why it became vulnerable will be clear from the rest of the paper.

The NESP was formulated and implemented on the hypothesis that there was sufficient political will to implement the plan in the teeth of oppositional politics. Above all, it was assumed that the Panchayat

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2 Reprinted in *Naya Sandesh*, December 15, 1979 (in Nepali).

System would deliver to the common man all the goods it promised him. It was assumed that Nepal's economy would grow at the rate of four per cent per annum at the end of the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1971-1976) so that the low level and middle level manpower produced by the educational networks would be absorbed by a growing and healthy economy. The actual growth rate for the plan period was, however 0.49 per cent!

The National Planning Commission for one made this fact no secret: 'That there has been no appreciable improvement in the per capita growth rate during the first four years of the Fourth Five-Year Plan will be evident if the population growth rate (2.6 per cent) and the growth rate of GPD (2.65 per cent) for the same period are compared.[3]

Official and unofficial analyses show that the economic performance of the Panchayat System has been nothing if not dismal.

The successive administrations since the implementation of the NESP had, understandably, opted for soft decisions, particularly in the matter of enrolment in the university. Access to higher education is a live political issue in Nepal because education is one of the few avenues which offers a marginal access to power which had hitherto been the monopoly of the Khas Thakuris, Chetris, and Brahmins. Naturally, the social and regional distribution of higher education enrolment and opportunities have been a much politicised issue. This is clear also from the regular furore made in the press and the national legislature during the time of university admission and entrance tests.

Apart from this, the pressure on higher education is mainly due to three factors:

i. the failure of the economy to absorb the low and middle level manpower who would have terminated their education at the end of some form of formal schooling;
ii. the recruitment policy of the employing agencies, such as the HMG and the corporations, which insist on certification as an entry requirement, rather than relevant training or acquisition of useful skills, and
iii. glamour value and false importance attached to university certification in our society.

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3 National Planning Commission, 1975, p. 10.

Consequently, Tribhuvan University has nearly always faced gate-crashing situations. Year after year it has been obliged by His Majesty's Government to admit more students than it can ever teach in any one year. During my tenure as University Rector, when a Dean of a technical institute resisted the pressure of the Minister of Education, the Minister's reply to us was classic: 'Tribhuvan University is for Nepal; Nepal is not for Tribhuvan University. How you do it is your business. Since I have said it you just do it.'

Such insensitivity to academic problems is by and large responsible for reducing Tribhuvan University to what it is. Since its inception, the university has been uncomfortably trapped between two cruel imperatives:

i. The political imperative is that it should admit everyone who seeks admission into the university, irrespective of the number of teachers available, the available accommodation, and the library and laboratory facilities available on campuses.
ii. The economic imperative is that the university has to function with whatever budget the Ministry of Finance allocates it, irrespective of the number of students it is compelled to accept.

One visible consequence of these two compulsions is that Tribhuvan University has had to give, not higher education, but higher education plus water, i.e., one of the most diluted and cheap forms of higher education in the Third World.

In the 1979 summer semester, Tribhuvan University was teaching 32,000 students in its 80 campuses comprising 10 teaching institutes. It had some 2,300 teachers and 3,400 administrative personnel on its pay-roll. The 32,000 university enrolment made 2 per cent of the total population of the university-going age group (i.e., 16-22-year-olds). In India the percentage is 4 per cent, in Japan 22 per cent, in the UK and Western Europe it is 15 per cent, and in the U.S.A., it is 50 per cent. A large proportion of the university's enrolment and faculty are sub-standard. Because of the rush of students, raw university graduates are recruited in the faculty to teach the expanding student population. Some 70 per cent of Tribhuvan University's faculty had never seen any other university campus other than Kirtipur.

Out of the 32,000 students enrolled in Tribhuvan University in the

summer of 1979, about 75 per cent were SLC third divisions. Nearly 70 per cent of these students had failed in one or more courses during the first semester. The rate of attrition in the form of drop-outs between semesters, repeaters, and failures was unbelievably high. In fact, in the Institute of Science it was as high as 56 per cent. While the NESP visualised higher education as an investment in human resources, the short-sightedness of our politicians has successfully converted it into the most wasteful form of investment in human resources.

With this kind of academic environment, periodic eruptions of student unrest and activism are not an inscrutable development. For some years both teaching and learning in Tribhuvan University have been defeating experiences, stimulating mostly negativism and resentment against all forms of established authority—educational or otherwise. In these surroundings it has been relatively easy to sow the seeds of discontent and restiveness than in more congenial academic surroundings.

It is, thus, not unusual that the NESP has had more hostile critics than objective evaluators. The plan is one of the most laudable efforts made by a soft State to implement a hard plan. Unless one is over-biased against the NESP no sensible citizen of Nepal, irrespective of his political ideology, will question some of the following premises of the plan:

> The main object of higher education will be to produce trained manpower. Higher education will be correlated to the job opportunities of the future. Technical education will receive special emphasis with a view of meeting the needs of technical manpower for successful implementation of the national plan. Qualitative improvement of education will be synchronized with its quantitative growth. Arrangements will be made to reduce the number of those taking arts and humanities and increase the number of those who elect technical subjects. The university will organise a separate admission test to determine eligibility for higher education. The number of students joining higher education institutions will gradually be reduced from the present (1970) 27 per cent to 19 per cent (of the secondary enrolment), etc.[4]

Even if a most enlightened government came to power in Nepal it could not have done anything better. No doubt, the NESP had a pronounced

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4 Ministry of Education, 1970, pp. vii and ff.

political content, but then every system of education has some or other political content. Education has never been politically value-free, in the first place.

Today the NESP is, for all intents and purposes, dead; all the innovations that it brought about in higher education have been gracefully or disgracefully withdrawn one by one—the entrance test, the semester system, the comprehensive examinations, compulsory Master's thesis, the National Development Service, and so on. The plan lies dismantled and the university campuses are now somewhat like the deserted sites of construction which were abandoned midway. We are once again back to square one.

Nepal had seen seven ministers of education between the implementations of the NESP and its final dismantling under the auspices of the Royal Commission. Each of them was, in his own small way, eager that there should be no student unrest during his tenure. Each of them had forced the university to do things which the university, if left on its own, would not have liked to do, including the implementation of the NESP in higher education. The three Vice-Chancellors who worked under these ministers would, today, gladly testify to the uncomfortable political and economic imperatives under which they had to implement the plan. Running the university had been for them basically an exercise in tightrope-walking. The final say had almost always been of political considerations rather than of the academic norms, values, and standards. When a minister of education dictates to the university to admit 1,200 students in a campus which can take only 300 students under normal circumstances, it is difficult to understand what motive he could have had other than, of course, clinging to power to make yet more of such decisions?

Consequently, Tribhuvan University has now become the sacrificial lamb of the Panchayat System—so readily available for placating the opposition, actual or immanent. While the Panchayat politicians have succeeded in reducing it to a refugee camp, opposition politicians have converted it into an unfailing garrison. The real casualty in this game is, of course, neither. The real casualties are the sincere students and members of the faculty committed to teaching and research of some merit, which is what a university is ultimately for.

In the fiscal year 1979/80, Tribhuvan University had an annual budget of Rs 18.55 crores. Much of this amount in the last two years may be said

to have gone down the drain because, except for very short spells here and there, most campuses could not do any serious teaching. This is merely the tangible and computable loss. The intangible loss is even more damaging. The university is unlikely to be the same place again. What it has lost is hardly recoverable—its credibility as an academic institution. It has been pushed so hard against the wall both by the government and the opposition politicians that it has lost its credibility in the eyes, not so much of the public, as in its own eyes—in the eyes of the faculty, students and, above all, of the university administrators.

An erstwhile Minister of Education has recently published a paper in a local English-language daily, analysing what he thought were the main reasons for the collapse of the NESP. Part of his explanation was that the elites revolted against the plan because it sought to give non-elitist or mass education. This is a fascinating, but somewhat ingenious, interpretation of facts which should have been familiar to those who are so directly involved in the decision-making process in education, particularly those decisions which ultimately led to the collapse of the plan. The revolt was not of the elites against a non-elitist system of education. It certainly was deeper than that. It was a revolt of the masses against the elites who were monopolising power under the partyless Panchayat System, of which the NESP was mistakenly considered a sub-system.

The most tangible evidence of public discontent with the Panchayat System is the result of the national referendum held in May 1980. 45 per cent of the voters rejected the system outright: they opted for a complete change in the political system. The remaining 55 per cent voted for substantial political reforms. One clear message of the referendum result is that few political institutions in Nepal are intrinsically sacrosanct in public eyes, particularly if they fail to deliver the promised goods to the common man. If they fail to stem the ever-rising tide of nepotism and corruption, their charismatic and rhetorical appeal alone will no more compensate for the eroding credibility of these institutions.

Tribhuvan University was founded as the nation's monument to the late King Tribhuvan who was not only the founder of democracy in Nepal but also one of the noblest of her monarchs. To sacrifice its sanctity in order to 'restore' democracy in Nepal is not only an act of desecration: it is an act of vandalism. It is now fruitless to ask who is ultimately responsible for reducing the university to what it is—a raped institution.

The question now is: will it ever be able to rise again like the phoenix out of its own ashes?

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Naya Sandesh, Dec 15, 1979.

II

English Studies

5

Is Shakespeare Really Necessary?

In several parts of the world the problems of English teaching are vitiated by a radical uncertainty as to its pedagogical aims. Part of this uncertainty originates in the inability of decision-makers to achieve a clear perspective on the past history and the present needs—keeping the two apart, so that English teaching has now become a multiply ambiguous activity in pedagogical terms. For instance, when one talks about English teaching in the context of the Indian sub-continent it is difficult to decide whether the issues being debated relate to 1) English as a communication need, i.e., as a medium of instruction, a lingua franca, a second language, a 'library' language of international communication, or 2) English as an academic-scholarly specialisation. The confusion is deep-rooted but not unrelated to a gamut of issues—the teaching of English literature being one of the obvious ones. The confusion is partly a legacy of colonial history. In the Indian sub-continent, at least, the whole concept of 'English' education—not just English teaching—was intimately bound up with an expressed belief in the value of English literature. This belief was transplanted wholesale together with several British practices in India.

The influence of the early nineteenth-century British practice had been extensive, and it continued to remain so through two agencies: British examination taken overseas (with a preponderantly literary English syllabus) and British-trained teachers and inspectors. They believed that what was right for Britain in the nineteenth century for the native-speaker situation, would also be valuable overseas in the second

or foreign-language situations. Thus, in several countries of the Commonwealth echoes of the past dogma are continuously audible in one form or another.

The social and political changes in the world after the World War II as well as changes in the approaches to teaching of English to foreign students have made a close scrutiny of pedagogy of English teaching an urgent necessity in these areas of the world. Until the recent past 'English Studies' meant nothing more than either Anglo-Saxon/Middle English option or English literary studies. This is particularly true of the colleges and universities of the Indian sub-continent. But since the 1950s English Studies in this part of the world have been in a state of ferment. For one, there is an increasing infusion of new ideas and methods, mostly derived from current development in linguistics.

Every year, more and more British-American and other English-speaking expatriates as well as native experts, trained in diverse schools of language teaching methodology, are entering the colleges and university departments where, in the face of severe academic, administrative and financial limitations, painful efforts are continuously being made to switch over established traditional methods to recent language teaching techniques.

A distinct impact of the recent upheaval in the schools is to compel the educational decision-makers to re-consider the aims and methods as well as the rationale of English Studies in general and of the English Literary Studies in the colleges and universities in particular. That this problem is more than local is obvious from the King's College Cambridge Conference, held on July 16-18, 1962.[1] At this conference what is of interest to us is a general air of uncertainty as to the definition of aims and rationale of teaching English literature overseas, the uncertainty that noticeably hung round the gathering of the experts from all over the world. As one of the participants put it,

> Too often the intrinsic value of studying English literature is taken for granted; aims become clouded because they are seldom questioned. Relevant questioning might produce better teaching as well as a clearer purpose.[2]

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1 Press, 1963.

2 Perren, 1963, p. 18.

English literature has been taught overseas for well over a century, and if the intrinsic value of studying it is ever questioned it is only to offer some glib and vague answer. However, far-reaching changes taking place in the developing countries of Asia and Africa as well as the search for a rationale in the humanistic and literary studies in the West itself have made the teaching of English Literature a questionable enterprise. It is of profound significance to us that, on the one hand, the countries of cultural metropolises in the West are on their own facing increasing criticism of literary studies from quite different quarters (practising academics, drop-outs proposing 'counter-courses', radicals exposing the 'politics of literature'). The peripheral overseas centres of these literary studies are, on the other hand, facing criticism of the literary studies either as a 'transplanted discipline or as a linguistically unrealistic' one. The point at issue is, however, the same, i.e., the rationale of teaching literature.

The question is why teach English literature? The Cambridge Conference devoted a whole session to this question. This is symptomatic of the changing, and debatable status of English Literature as a pedagogic subject overseas. In their search for a rationale, however, the experts were divided, but most tilted heavily to the traditional non-functional rationale. The tone and approach characteristic of the liberal-humanistic apologists is nowhere in greater evidence than in Holloway's paper, 'Aspects of the Study of English Literature in Afro-Asian Countries', where he writes:

> Needless to say, students of English literature, wherever they are, can be expected to draw from their studies the benefits of English as a broad, flexible, and liberal discipline, concerned with a literature which is not clearly excelled by any other, either in quality or in continuity over a long period of time...There is no systematic study of literature which does not foster many qualities of mind—judgement (both intellectual and moral); cogency and flexibility of mind; maturity of understanding; and a sense of evidence, of detail and of history being among them.[3]

Holloway's is a typical, in some sense complacent, formulation of the 'liberal humanistic' rationale. The list of 'benefits' can be re-phrased,

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3 Holloway, 1963, pp. 20-21.

the order changed but the assumptions have nearly always remained the same. In other words, we teach English literature, no matter in what linguistic, social or cultural context as a training in sensibility, as an education of the mind. The liberal humanist's position is based on the understanding that i) the appeal of all great literature is universal, and ii) that all great literature is universally accessible. Such an assumption has been the basis of all the classics-based liberal education in the West at least since the Renaissance. This was partly due to the stranglehold of Greek and Latin in education as 'models' of perfection in literary and rhetorical arts. In many parts of the Commonwealth, English literature has served a similar function. Johnson admonished his aspiring contemporaries to 'devote day and night to the study of Addison's prose' if they wished to cultivate a polite style. More or less in the same vein, the English learners overseas are offered English prose writers from Malory and the Authorised Version Bible to R.L. Stevenson as models of stylistic achievement.

In the last 40 years the name which is most commonly associated with a belief in the moral efficacy of English Literary Studies is not that of Holloway but that of Leavis. His claims about the 'centrality' of the English Literary Studies in any scheme of liberal-humanist education have been the most articulate ones since the 1930s. Since it is Dr Leavis, more than any single figure since the founding of English Honours Schools in London (1829) Oxford (1893) and Cambridge (1917), who advocated their centrality, his version of the liberal-humanist rationale deserves a hearing:

> The essential discipline of an English School is the literary-critical; it is a true discipline, only in an English School if anywhere will it be fostered, and it is irreplaceable. It trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence—intelligence that integrates as well as analyzes and must have pertinacity and staying power as well as delicacy...There is no need to add at the moment, by way of indicating the inherent educational possibilities of the literary-critical discipline, than that it can, in its peculiar preoccupation with the concrete, provide all incomparably inward and subtle initiation into the nature and significance of tradition.[4]

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4 Leavis, 1943, pp. 34-35.

Here, Leavis does not appear to be concerned in the least about the context in which the English School would find itself congenial; what seems symptomatic is the abandonment with which he formulates the educational possibilities of an English School. In this sense, Leavis's English School is much more a *vision* than a *pedagogical programme*, and an ideal Leavisite English School would be a gathering of budding Leavisite critics working under the same roof and if they are not all English they would at least be British. It is when such characteristic pleading for the teaching of English literature is absorbed and adopted by the students, and disciples of Leavis in the schools, colleges, and universities overseas that a confusion of pedagogical aims and perspective takes place. Although Holloway, for instance, wilfully uses the parenthetical expression 'wherever they are' to qualify 'students of English literature', Leavis does not even do that, so that the educational potentialities are of doubtful relevance to overseas and non-native students of English literature.

The fundamental weakness in the liberal-humanist rationale for teaching English literature overseas is that it fails to distinguish the gulf that separates the native-speakers of the English language from the non-native speakers of English. The differences are at times staggering in social, cultural, psychological and linguistic implications but the point remains: for all non-natives, for all overseas students, English literature is a literature written in a foreign or a second language. Even in countries where it is in use as a second language; familiarity with the language is merely a familiarity with the surface—the grammar and the lexicon. Literature is always deeply culture-bound. The literary works assume a readership with certain social and cultural presuppositions. The accessibility of such works in linguistic terms is no surety that they will be socially or culturally or psychologically accessible. This is true not only of the literary output of historically distant periods but also, in fact more so, of contemporary works of literature.

The universalist position of the liberal-humanist (such as Leavis or Holloway) does not hold much water as soon one begins to realise that teaching English literature to British students in Britain may result in the attainment of one and all of the values that Holloway lists, but to non-native speakers of English, English literature, its ancient and modern classics, are multiply inaccessible because of several wide cross-cultural gaps. The moral-aesthetic values of teaching English literature

are likely to be attained only if these cross-cultural gaps can be filled by different teaching techniques. English literature is one thing to the English: it is a quite different experience to a young man from an Indian village or an African peasant.

The universalist position of the liberal-humanist (such as Leavis or Holloway) cannot answer why it has to be English literature: any literature, all literature, is ennobling, and there is no reason why a systematic study of French or Russian, or Chinese or Indian classical or vernacular literature cannot inculcate similar values in the students. Pedagogically, if the objectives are cultivation of such liberal values, it is much more sound and realistic to teach one's own classical and vernacular literature than to teach a literature whose social and cultural content is not easily grasped. Teaching one's own classical or vernacular literature has at least one great advantage; the social and cultural presuppositions are within the student's grasp though some of these may already have been fossilised through history. Similarly, Chinua Achebe or R.K. Narayan is likely to be more accessible to a Nigerian or an Indian student than John Galsworthy or Graham Greene. In his assertion of the universality of appeal what the English liberal-humanist is so often likely to forget is the particularity of details of his society and culture which he can, of course, afford to take for granted, but which are often an insurmountable barrier for an outsider and the uninitiated. The penumbra of social and cultural meanings is so vividly a part of the meaning of a literary work that to be really able to appreciate some of these works one needs to have a considerable ability to identify with the writer's society and culture and see the world through his eyes.

The discussion above clearly shows that a search for a functional rationale of teaching English overseas is overdue—a rationale which could supplement if not replace the traditional liberal-humanist one. Without denying the value of literature in the moral-aesthetic education of the students, the traditional pedagogic aims have, in part, accepted English literature as a model of perfection and hence of production. Although even the most entrenched of traditionalists would not suggest that the literature student should write like Milton or Thomas Browne, at least it is assumed that writers should be 'models' of stylistic polish, refinement and perfection. Some 'set' texts are required reading because of this functional orientation while others are there simply because these

are the 'classics' of the language. The line dividing the two is not always easy to draw, but that does not mean that the line does not exist.

Whenever literary works (mostly prose) are held up as models of production, perhaps the expressive and rhetorical functions of language are in greater prominence than its ordinary everyday communicative functions. Consequently, it is not always easy to say whether the purpose, the pedagogical aim of literary education, expressed in explicit functional terms, are not to produce writers and critics in English. Even in British or American society such an approach to the teaching of literature has its limits. A system of education in which the teaching of literature is to produce more poets and writers, comes sooner or later under social suspicion in any society. In a non-native context, such an aim is at once indefensible and out of place because in a society where there are few readers who can read (let alone read English) producing writers and poets in English cannot be an educational aim.

A number of alternative definitions of the functional rationale have been formulated, and some have found articulate ventilation in the King's College Cambridge Conference, for instance. One such definition is that the study and teaching of English literature overseas has almost had a direct impact on the modernisation of local vernacular literatures. For instance, prior to their contact with English literature the only models available to writers in the Indian subcontinent were either writers in classical Sanskrit or in Persian and Arabic. Contact with English has been most rewarding for the Indian vernacular literatures because the contact was not only with English literature, it was also an encounter through English with the Western literary tradition as a whole. The reason why today Bengali has a much more sophisticated literary writing than any other Indian vernacular is largely due to the earliest contacts of the Bengali intelligentsia with English literature.

Equally important is the role of the products of English literary education in providing the recruits to an elite in the developing countries of Asia and Africa—the elite who have acquired a richer perspective on their own society, culture and literature because of their study of English literature. Dr Leavis was quite right when he claimed that 'one of the virtues of Literary Studies is that they lead constantly outside themselves'.[5]

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5 Leavis, 1943, p. 36.

Many of the products of literary education in English switch over to several different fields in their societies, and they have been, more often than not, able to bring to these fields some fresh perspective acquired through their knowledge and familiarity with a different literature, society or culture. In many instances, 'perspective' is the ability to compare and place, the ability to correlate different elements in an acceptable order. This, in some sense, is precisely what the teaching of English literature gives the student. In this respect, the fact that English literature is so different from anything they would be familiar with in a local language appears to be an invaluable asset. Here Lord Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* (dated February 2, 1835) was prophetic:

> To this class ('a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes in opinions, in morals and intellect') we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.[6]

> This class of persons has also gained a valuable insight into the evolution of a modernised society and civilisation. In so far as modernisation and transformation of their own traditional societies is the professed aim of the decision-makers this insight, again, can be an asset of enormous potentiality. The study of English literature is also a study of the structure, conditions and values of a modernised Western society. It is not just an initiation into an unfamiliar cultural tradition and its continuity; more positively, it is also a response to a modern Western community—one way of getting to know it. English literature may be said to provide a unique opportunity to encounter the evolution of a civilisation because getting to know one is getting to know the other: Shakespeare is to the Elizabethan Court what Dickens is to the poverty of the lower middle classes in England. We cannot study or teach one without teaching the other.
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> In a sense, literature is an expression of a society in totality—all that is peculiarly characteristic of a particular community—its organisation, institutions, laws, customs, work, play, art, religion and so on. Such a

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6 Macaulay, 1835, p. 112.

comprehensive insight into a different culture and society can be of incomparable value to students in traditional Asian or African societies, because through this insight one can make greater sense of the culture and society where one actually belongs. It can give one comprehensive insight into one's own culture.

In the cultivation of a sense of belonging, the study of English literature is like a two-pronged alley way; the dangers are, of course, always there. Among others, Gokak, in his paper at the King's College Conference, Cambridge, phrases the whole problem in irreproachable terms:

> But there is also the likelihood that (the students of English literature) may come under the spell of 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and be held in her thraldom forever. The contrast between their own society and the social evolution presented in English Literature is so great that they may be tempted to give up their attempt to transform their society and to inaugurate their own literary traditions. They may surrender utterly to a kind of colonialism in their intellectual and aesthetic life in spite of their political emancipation. In that case they will be a lost generation, like the Indians in the fifties of the last century, who thought that they lived in a desert; read Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Arnold; dreamed of London, Oxford or Cambridge; and remembered with avidity every detail in the topography of 'Thyrisis' and 'The Scholar Gypsy', but not the landscape in Kalidas's *Meghaduta* or the name of the sage who educated Rama and his brothers.[7]

The readiness of many members of developing societies in the present decades to despise their own traditions in the pursuit of Europeanisation shows that the teaching of English literature can in many ways deracinate and alienate young men from their own society and culture. Instead of promoting a sense of belonging (which is what education should do), instead of providing what Leavis, for instance, says literary training does (i.e., provide an incomparably inward and subtle initiation into the nature and significance of tradition), in the context of an overseas community such a training might be producing an exactly opposite result—i.e., uprooting the youth from their places, peoples, institutions

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7 Gokak, 1963, p. 28.

and values with nothing to offer in return as an alternative. The dangers of producing a class of literary prodigal sons who cannot return home psychologically or intellectually are more real in the case of the teaching of English literature than in the case of teaching any other single discipline.

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6

English in Nepalese Education: A Case for Coordination

For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

—T.S. Elliot, 'East Coker', *Four Quartets*

Introduction

After nearly a decade, Tribhuvan University English teachers are meeting once again to deliberate upon their profession. In 1968 the First National Conference of College Teachers of English was held with several assumptions. Among other things, it was assumed that 1. the standard of English might deteriorate further when the university would switch over to the Nepali medium; 2. the SLC English will not change in the next decade or two, and 3. something in the form of remedial work or cash programme should be done at the college level, particularly for the First year Intermediate students. Between the 1968 Conference and this convention far reaching changes have taken place in Nepalese education. The National Education System Plan (NESP) 1971-1976 has already been implemented all over the kingdom. Since the National Education Plan aims to change not only the structure of education but also the content of education, at least one of the assumptions of the 1968 Conference (that the SLC English will not change in the next decade or two) came out to be a miscalculation.

With the implementation of the NESP the English curricula of Lower Secondary (Grade 4-7) and Secondary (Grade 8-10) have visibly changed. So have the textbooks to teach these curricula. Besides, the NESP has set up major policy landmarks which have a direct bearing on language

teaching, particularly, English teaching. To mention only a couple of these points, the NESP has defined level objectives of each level of school and university education. The plan assumes each level of education as self-terminating; and for each higher level it sets up proportionally decreasing enrolment targets. For example, only 40% of the Lower Secondary enrolment will get into the Secondary schools. Only 19% of the Secondary enrolment will get into the University. These targets and assumptions of the Plan have crucial implications for any viable programme of English teaching at the school and the university levels. If each level of education terminates in itself, and if only 40% of Lower Secondary and only 19% of Secondary students get into the university, English language teaching, too, will need to be self-terminating and therefore self-contained at each level of education.

However, the English curricula at the Lower Secondary, Secondary, Certificate and Diploma levels carry over the language learning business from one level to the other. English curriculum does not terminate in itself at any single level of education. On the contrary, English occupies 10% of teaching/learning time at Lower Secondary, 11.11% at Secondary, 16.68% (15 out of 90 credit programmes) at the Certificate, and 16.66% (12 out of 72 credit programmes) at the Diploma level. English is present at several levels for 11 consecutive years occupying 10% to 16.66% of the curriculum. According to an informed estimate, English occupies a large part of the total Nepalese investment in education. Something like 30 per cent of the annual budget may well go to English.[1] But what are the returns of this huge investment in time and resources? It seems the returns are diminishing in inverse proportion to our investment, and diminishing year by year. One does not know what people mean when they talk about the 'fast deteriorating standard of English', nor does one know how they measure the speed and the nature of deterioration. But if the failure rates at the SLC and university examinations are any reliable indicators, the rates are not only high but disturbingly high because 80% to 90% fail SLC examination because they fail in English. Last year 78% of the SLC candidates failed; not a single candidate passed SLC from a number of districts (such as Lamjung) because they failed in English. By a liberal estimate, based on a random sample study of last year's results, only 19% to 22% of this year's 39,000 SLC candidates are

1 Davies and Kansakar, 1971.

likely to get through in English. English has been one of the two subjects that hold them back—the other being Mathematics. Between 1960 and 1968 the pass rate at the SLC Examination used to be anything from 34.89% to 60.74% (1965). In recent years the pass rate has gone down from 40% to 22%. At the university level of education, the attrition and failure rates in the semester system have been even higher than those at the school system. For instance, out of nearly 11,000 students enrolled at the beginning of the Summer Semester 1975, it is estimated that only 1,000 will have the clearance for the forthcoming Comprehensive Examination for Certificate and Diploma levels.

These figures are very disturbing indeed, particularly in the context of the NESP whose declared aim is the attainment of qualitative education. Thus, although NESP has made some of the assumptions of the 1968 Conference outdated, the concern for the problems of English teaching in our educational system need not be diminished. In a sense, the problem has become more acute since the implementation of the new English curricula in the school system. In the first place, with the implementation of the NESP there is a complete switch-over to Nepali as the medium of instruction, of examination and of textbooks in the school system. In spite of the fact that there is now 11.11% of curriculum devoted to English at the Lower Secondary and 16.66% at the Secondary level, students learn less English at school. For example, in the old SLC Examination there used to be two 100-marks papers in English. In their place there is only one 100-marks paper now. Students learn hardly any English outside the English classroom.

Inside the English classroom the situation is not particularly inspiring to learn or teach English either. Our English curricula are now based on oral-aural-structural approach to language teaching. English textbooks have been prepared accordingly. But 64.15% (716 out of 1,116) of English teachers in our school system are untrained. Perhaps, the only method the majority of untrained teachers can use is the lamo mane and choto mane approach to English teaching. The classroom-size in our schools is discouraging the teachers to use the methods required by the textbooks. Thus several inputs, so very vital for the implementation of the new English curricula, are missing from the school system: the method, the appropriate classroom-size, the trained teacher, and above all a reliable system of language testing as a feedback to teaching. Consequently, school teachers and students are suffering from the yoke

of new English curricula and textbooks, not knowing what to do with them on their own.

After all the investment in English teaching and the NESP, the Nepali taxpayer might as well wonder if he can afford the luxury of 78% failure rate in SLC examination—almost all because of English. The 22% SLC graduates are another problem altogether to which we will come back later in this discussion. In brief, most of the failures in our educational system appear to be due to language: due the inability to come to grips with the basics of the medium, English or Nepali. The rate of educational failures inflated by language failures raises a vital issue in our educational policy. Take for example, the problems of a SLC graduate. He did everything in the Nepali medium at school. He may know little English at the entry point for a university education in English. On entering the university, particularly a technical institute, he will be confronted with an impossible proposition: assimilate the contents of his subject areas in English. Although the university plans to switch over to Nepali medium by 1984, there are hardly any textbooks and reference materials available in Nepali, particularly of technical nature. This is a basic issue of our education system, not just of English teaching. Therefore, it cannot be decided in isolation piecemeal fashion. English language teaching situation at the university level is not a problem that can now be assessed in isolation from the school system. Because of the presence of English at several levels of education system and because of the place of English as a medium in higher education, any discussion of English teaching involves some of the basic issues of our educational strategy.

English in the School System

Of the SLC graduates 88.7% manage to get into various institutes of Tribhuvan University. Because they are the input to higher education the amount and kind of English they bring in with them, directly affects the quality of higher education. Tribhuvan University's Entrance Tests do not purport to be a filtering process to sort out the deficient ones in English. But the marks awarded to them in their SLC English have only a face value. Perhaps, the more reliable indicators of their actual proficiency in English, in default of other unassailable ones, are their performance through the semesters in Internal Assessments and Semester Examinations. Even after two or more semesters of basic,

remedial and crash courses, even after additional intensive inputs in English, their proficiency in English is much below the level it should have been at the entry point of a university education where English is the only language of reference. At present, an average university student is required to cope with the medium as well as the content.

To explore the problems of English teaching from the perspective of the total education structure, one has to consider, for example, the implications of the following facts for a viable programme of English teaching:

i. Nepali has already become the sole medium in the school system; the university is hoping to switch over to Nepali by 1984; at present text-books and reference materials are available only in English.
ii. English is present as a compulsory subject both in the school and in the university curricula consecutively for 11 years occupying 10% to 16% of teaching/learning hours.
iii. In SLC Examinations, 78% fail; 80% to 90% of these failures are due to failure in English.
iv. Of the 22% who pass SLC nearly 90% get into the university; only 30% of them manage to survive; inadequate grounding in English may be a main reason.
v. In order to remedy this situation some additional inputs in English (mainly of a remedial, crash, intensive, basic refresher type) is being given (mainly since 1971) at the certificate level.

The summary statement of the situation given above will have clearly shown that there are basically three problems: i) the problem of duration of English teaching; ii) the problem of effectiveness of English teaching, and iii) the problem of transition from one medium to another medium between the school and the university and the resulting educational failures. Let us first look into the problem of duration of English teaching in Nepal. We are already stepping into the last quarter of the twentieth century when foreign language teaching technology has reached a point of unbelievable sophistication—thanks to the linguistics revolution and the tape recorder revolution! Given the required inputs it is possible to learn any foreign language in less than two years. Besides, the degree of proficiency at the end of a two-year intensive course is, perhaps, better than that of our university

graduates in English. One does not have to go very far. The International Languages Campus of our own university is turning out excellent graduates in French, German, and Japanese. At the end of a four-semester course, their command of the four language skills is reportedly more enduring than the command of our university graduates over English at the end of a 11 year cycle of compulsory exposure to English. On all accounts English stays with our educational structure for a very long time. Because of its persistence from Lower Secondary to the Diploma level, students feel less motivated to learn it; after sometime they begin to consider it as a drag on their learning capacity. Its presence in the curriculum everywhere at every stage in itself creates a psychological barrier against assimilating it properly at any single stage. Undoubtedly, the best stage to learn English is the stage when language as such is learnt by the child. But by introducing English at Grade 4 (age level 9-11) and retaining it unto Diploma level (age 19-21) the learning tasks are dispersed over a whole decade, and slowly the law of diminishing returns begins to take care of English lessons. Thus the problem of duration is related to the problem of effectiveness. English teaching in Nepal is ineffective also because it goes on 'for its own sake' for a long time. It is, hopefully, not a heretic proposition to suggest that a shorter and a more effective English teaching programme can be devised provided we are committed to give all the necessary inputs to such a programme. A strong point in favour of the case for such a short but intensive programme is that, as Davies and Kansakar put it, 'it is not so much an increase in spending as redeployment of existing resources that is needed.'[2] (My emphasis).

Since I have already devoted a paper[3] to argue the case for a shorter but more intensive course/programme of English teaching in Nepal, I do not wish to waste this opportunity by restarting the arguments. One is aware of the fact that such a programme involves major curricular as well as administrative readjustments in the school system. But in view of the magnitude of the problem posed by attrition, failure, wastage and, above all, by the psychological intimidation of the teachers and learners alike, one hopes that as a long-term strategy the National Education Committee or Tribhuvan University's Institute of Education

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2 Davies and Kansakar, 1971.

3 Malla, 1975.

will engage an expert task force to exercise itself on an Intensive Programme in English. My own suggestion, at this stage, is that English should not continue as a dog in the manger all through our educational system. In the paper I referred to above, I have suggested that the best stage for such an intensive course is Grade 8-10 of the Secondary Level. Consider for a moment the quantitative and proportional enrolment targets set by the NESP (64% of the primary school going population in primary schools; 50% of primary enrolment in Lower Secondary; and 40% of the Lower Secondary enrolment in Secondary level). Thus if we start with 100 students at the Primary level only 3.8 students will enter the university. Therefore, there is every reason to give English to as few as possible and as late as possible, but give it as effectively as possible.

Of the three problems mentioned earlier, I will now come to the sensitive issue of the medium. Although the NESP has already stated Nepali as the medium in the school structure, in higher education it proposes to leave the status quo undisturbed 'pending alternative arrangement by His Majesty's Government'. By 1984 the university plans to switch over to Nepali. There is no reliable study of the problems university students are facing because of the medium. But one thing is quite clear: without making an adequate quantity of quality textbooks and reference materials available in Nepali, the switch-over to Nepali is going to be like putting the cart before the horse. The year 1984 is not far, but so far the university has not been able to publish anything noticeable in the Nepali medium. In April 1976 the university published 15,000 copies of a book called *Nepal Parichaya*; it cost the university Rs 2,74,000. Given the university's annual budget of Rs 10 crores and 60 lakhs, I have posed the problem of costing to the vernacular enthusiasts who seem to believe that we can switch over to Nepali in no time at no cost. Without adequate thought and preparation, switch-over to Nepali medium is likely to cause further erosion of educational standard. What is important is the assimilation of the content, not just the dissemination of a given medium. Producing quality teaching and reference materials in Nepali is not going to be an easy task. We have not yet been able to produce acceptable textbooks in Nepali for Primary school children-textbooks which are acceptable pedagogically and linguistically. Nearly all the Nepali textbooks prescribed for the school system have recently come under fire from the teachers as well as the language experts. In a

context such as ours an abrupt switch-over to Nepali medium in the university will be not only a well-intentioned but premature gesture but also a piece of exemplary unthoughtfulness.

When we lament the erosion of standard in English we often forget that Nepali has already taken its place in the school system. Nor do we remember the fact that the school population today is no longer what it used to be in the past. This year 39,000 students are taking the SLC Examination. Number directly affects standard, particularly the standard of English. Most of our educational policies are painful decisions to choose between expansion of opportunities and consolidation of the existing opportunities, and very often we end up in a compromise, that is to say, in a compromise of quality in favour of quantity. In Falgun 2032 Session, the enrolment in Lower Secondary was 1,96,000; in Secondary 74,000. The teacher-student ratio in English classes at Lower Secondary was 1:272; in secondary it was 1:187. The NESP suggests 1:25 ratio. Among the existing estimated total of 1,116 English teachers at Lower Secondary and Secondary levels, 716 are untrained (64.15%). Yet the Fifth Five Yearly Plan (1975-1980) proposes to expand the enrolment of Lower Secondary to 3,68,000 and of Secondary to 147 thousand by 1980!

English in University Education

In so far as English proficiency is concerned, an average SLC graduate who enters Tribhuvan University is a sub-standard output. The SLC English curriculum and textbooks, excellent as they are, are not for display, but for teaching and learning. But the painful fact is that not even 5% of the university entrants have the English proficiency they should have by the time they leave school. This creates numerous problems for the university. In the first place, can the university ignore the actual language proficiency of the SLC graduates and prescribe the curriculum for Certificate and Diploma levels on the basis of a hypothetical proficiency in English? Tribhuvan University has, under the present circumstances, three options open:

i. To discontinue teaching English, particularly of a basic remedial nature at the university. The secondary schools will need to take the sole responsibility of English teaching. They will have to develop an effective/intensive programme of English teaching. Tribhuvan

University, on its part, will have to develop reliable proficiency tests to be administered at the entry point, completely filtering the linguistically deficient ones from the entry point.

ii. To rely solely on the SLC marks as the indicator of English proficiency and admit in the university only those SLC graduates who have scored 50+ marks in English.

iii. The first two options will work only if the university can withstand public pressure on admission into the university. The third option is, therefore, to continue to give some additional inputs in English for university entrants for some time to come. Once the SLC English is effective and once there is some evidence of such effectiveness the university can upgrade the nature of inputs in English.

I tend to think that English teaching in Nepal is a lost battle, unless at this stage the main thrust of our policy is not towards an integrated and co-ordinated programme between the schools and the university at least for some years to come. Of course, our long term target should be to make SLC English more effective than it is at present. This is the ideal; all other options are only the second best, not the best. The university cannot carry on the remedial work in English indefinitely. It is a piece of poor educational strategy to perpetuate bad English teaching at school and oblige the university to do the remedial work. But it is an equally poor educational strategy to ignore the fact that our university entrants have not learnt adequate English. Thus, although the content of SLC English curriculum has changed the outputs of the new curriculum have not assimilated any more English than the outputs of the old curriculum. So NESP or no NESP, the following observations of the 1968 Conference participants have not lost their relevance yet:

> ...the college must accept the responsibility (to teach English) if the schools can't or don't do it at the moment. The time will come, we hope it will come very quickly, when schools will be able to do the job properly, in which case this basic remedial course, if you like to call it that, can be replaced by one of a higher standard.[4]

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4 Rathbone, 1968.

Undoubtedly, the best thing would have been to improve the SLC English. But in all likelihood the SLC English will not see any change in the next decade or two.[5]

Remarkably few things have happened in English teaching at Tribhuvan University since the 1968 Conference. The conference gave the Board of English Studies a mandate of recommendations to devise English curriculum which would suit the students' needs and their language abilities. After eight months' deliberations the Board of English Studies, under Dr Davies' chairmanship, approved a new set of syllabuses on July 30, 1970. The English syllabuses we are teaching now are basically what Dr Davies left with us. Except for some minor changes made by Dr Purcell and Dr Lohani,[6] most of the contents have remained as they were prescribed by the 1970 Board of English Studies. What minor changes were made were mainly tinkering with the syllabuses or textbooks. Dr Purcell adapted the syllabuses to the requirements of the semester system, and in the process supplied codes and course titles, including the unlikely ones such as Eng 101 Subcontinental English, Eng 192 International English; Eng 201 Literature and Journalism etc. Situational English Series was brought in by Dr Purcell and Dr Lohani pushed it out in the first instance. I am sure you are more familiar with those changes than I am. I do not wish to labour the point that there has been very little major change in the contents of university English curricula since 1971. So there is some justification in examining both the contents and the assumptions underlying those contents.

To take the assumption first, the general standard of English in the campuses, especially in the first year is not very high. University students need, above all, a remedial course in English as a foreign language, a course that will, if possible, provide some access to contemporary spoken and written English. The contents of the Davies syllabuses for Certificate and Diploma students were chosen mainly on the basis of the above assumptions. In terms of contents analysis the Davies syllabuses can be decomposed into the following components:

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5 Malla, 1968,

6 Malla, 1977.

Components	Language Areas	Language Skills
Remedial English	Structures/Usage	All the four skills
Comprehension	Content/Structures/ Vocabulary	Reading
Composition		Writing
Speech	Discourse/Expression Speech Sounds/ Connected Speech	Speaking /Listening
Contemporary English Reference Technique	Current English Idiom Dictionary	Cultivating a production model Using a Dictionary as a language learning tool.
English for Specific Purposes	Register/Scientific/ Business	Register Variation

The syllabuses discarded literary materials as unsuitable both for the students' language abilities and their language needs. This was, I think, the sore spot in the public controversy between the supporters and the critics of the Davies syllabuses. Given their professional background, which is almost entirely literary, one can understand the bitterness as well as the emotion of the critics and sympathise with them.

With a few minor changes we have been teaching the Davies syllabuses since 1971. One of the main objectives of this convention is to thoroughly review these syllabuses in terms of their objectives, assumptions, contents, suggested methods, materials and evaluation techniques. When we discuss the working paper on each component of the syllabus we should also analyse its place in the total programme, its relative importance and the credits we can assign it. As Chairman of English Subject Committee, I wish to make it quite clear that I do not have any idea to sell, not even English if you do not want it. Following Keats' sound advice I have kept my mind a thoroughfare. Therefore, if Tribhuvan University English teachers are not happy about the Davies syllabuses, if these courses are, as S.N. Verma puts it, 'utopian, unscientific and unrealistic', or if, as Y.P. Verma once put it, teaching a remedial course at Certificate level is 'a romantic adventure', if the Davies syllabuses, as Taranath Sharma lamented, 'deprive us of the charm whatsoever of the job of an English teacher', I invite the expert colleagues who are assembled here today to propose and table detailed alternatives. Every syllabus is an experiment and I do not believe that the Davies syllabuses

are without alternatives, but my colleagues who are critical of these syllabuses will have to come forward with firm, convincing and pedagogically and linguistically sound proposals. I have heard some of my colleagues grumble against these syllabuses in meetings and personal conversations. Some have ventilated their pent-up feelings in print as well. To give a recent sample,

> A few years ago we switched over from what was then considered stale, useless, unrealistic, unpractical, irrelevant to something which was hoped to be more useful, more relevant, and much needed. We really do not have any evidence to justify the belief of the pioneers of the change that the syllabus now in operation would remedy the ills in English teaching and resulting in the improvement of quality of our university graduates. But the general feeling expressed in the academic circles is discouraging. It is said that the change in syllabuses instead of contribution (sic) to improvement has proved instrumental to eroding the standard of English. I remember how the University results of IA and BA examinations about a decade ago which showed not less than 70% failures in English caused a kind of social tremor and its epicentre moved to the university inspiring the farmers of syllabuses to change the syllabuses in operation there with a religious belief that the change would improve the situation from parroting to learning and raise the level of learners. Today it seems that the prophecy which was responsible for the dislodgement of old syllabus has proved rather hazardous.[7]

I am afraid I do not know whether the prophecy, if ever it had been made, has come true or not, nor do I know whether the reform has worked or not. I cannot be as categorical as Dr Verma, because my knowledge of English teaching is limited. The Davies syllabuses were introduced in 1971 for those who sat for examinations in 1973 so that it is perhaps too early to draw any valid conclusions on the impact of the reform. In English teaching there are several variables and inputs involved, other than the syllabuses and textbooks. The school situation since the implementation of the NESP and the new English curricula make at least that much quite clear. My own proposal, therefore, is not to scrape the Davies syllabuses, but to refine them in the light of our

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7 Verma, 1976.

experiences of handling them in the classroom during the last six years. I have, therefore, requested my colleagues to closely scrutinise the contents of the syllabuses and the textbooks, and in terms of the contents prepare separate working papers on each—clarifying the teaching points, the method, the materials, the problems faced so far and, above all, the evaluation techniques. I have hoped that in the process of such a detailed analysis we will be arriving at an explicit statement of our assumptions and objectives of teaching each component as well as our priorities in the English teaching programme as a whole. The convention is expected to consider these papers one by one and give the English Subject Committee necessary feedback information for taking decisions on, not only issues of policy and programmes, but also on the details of such programmes of English teaching in Tribhuvan University.

University English Curricula

After the Mid-Term Evaluation of the NESP, as one of the compulsory curriculum areas, the Subject Committee of Compulsory English has come under the jurisdiction of the Curriculum Development Centre. This has made a centralised programming of English teaching in Tribhuvan University a distinct possibility. But at the same time it has created a number of protocol problems within the federal setup of the university. As the Faculty Board of each institute is autonomous and as the Board is the final approving body for all academic issues including the curriculum, the Compulsory English Subject Committee, now functioning at the Curriculum Development Centre, is facing the problem of gap in the flow of authority and communication between the CDC and the institutes, particularly the technical institutes. Although English is by definition a compulsory curriculum area, each institute has now been prescribing its own credit package for English—ranging from 4 credits (Institute of Forestry) to 15 credits (Institute of Humanities) at Certificate level, and 3 credits (Institute of Agriculture) to 12 credits (Institute of Humanities) at Diploma level. It is not so much the lack of uniformity as the inexplicitness of considerations in English curriculum at technical institutes which is most distressing. One of the objectives of this convention is to scrutinise the basis on which we can develop a common compulsory English curriculum which is acceptable, not only for the general institutes such as the Institute of Humanities,

but also for the technical institutes such as the Institute of Forestry or of Engineering where the nature of the programme is quite different. There are some genuine constraints, such as the total number of credits available for content areas, but at the same time there is a strong feeling in the technical institutes that English is a luxury which they cannot ordinarily afford. This creates a paradoxical situation in the university's English language programmes. On the one hand, we are administering English as a compulsory subject to all university students because we believe English is the language of science and technology, on the other hand, it is the technical institutes (including the Institute of Science) which consider English as a luxury beyond their credit capacity.

Similarly, there is the problem of establishing articulation between English curricula at different levels and between the compulsory area and the major area. At present the transition from the school to the university English is abrupt, disjunct and inarticulate in terms of graduation and interdependence. The same is true of the transition from the Certificate English to Diploma English and from Diploma English to Degree English programmes. Besides, there is no visible co-relation between the Compulsory English and the Major English curricula at the Certificate and Diploma levels. Although this convention will devote most of its time to Compulsory English, I believe it will be fruitful to devote some time to the Major English curricula as well. Perhaps we may not be meeting again at such a venue for a number of years to come. It will not therefore be unwise to raise a few points about Major English. Although the Degree Programme in English has seen some crucial changes in its contents and orientation, Major English curricula at the certificate and Diploma levels have remained mostly conventional, with hardly any sign of breakthrough in orientation. Since some 30% of those who do M.A. in English end up as teachers either at the University or in schools, I tend to think that an elective professional language teaching course should be incorporated in Degree English programme. Similarly, in the Diploma level Major English, some solid grounding in the description of the sound system, the syntax and the semantics of English will be as asset for the assimilation of the literary components both at the Diploma and Degree levels. Therefore, the convention can think over the proposal that there should be greater language emphasis in Major English as well, particularly of a descriptive nature.

Conclusion

In a recently published paper of mine I have committed myself to indiscretions in print. Since I cannot disown them any more I had better reproduce one of them as a conclusion to this paper:

> English teaching in Nepal is operating in a vacuum. There is an almost total absence of reliable and supporting evidence either about the actual uses of English in the country or about the actual level of English proficiency of any level of learners. At present both are unredeemed terra incognita: the so-called English language needs of the country and the so-called low 'standard' of English...This amounts to confessing that we, the English teachers, are hitherto groping between two stretches of darkness: the uncertainty of uses of English and the uncertainty of 'standard' of English in Nepal.[8]

Only action research can supply 'reliable and supporting evidence' so necessary for policy formulation and programming, including English teaching. Therefore, I have high hopes that the convention will motivate profession-minded English teachers to formulate research proposals in various areas of English teaching. Elsewhere, I have suggested the following areas for action research: 1. Proficiency Studies through Group and Sample Tests; 2. Diagnostic Tests on Problem Areas in Learning English; 3. Error Analyses; 4. Contrastive Analyses of Major Areas of Phonology and Grammar, English versus Nepali languages. To these now I would like to add two more areas which need urgent and expert field enquiry: 1. The failures in English and their Relation to the Aggregate Attrition Rate in Education, and 2. The Problems of the medium in Secondary and in Higher Education. The Subject Committee cannot function without the stimulus of such research, nor can it function without the support of the members of Instruction committees scattered all over the kingdom. There must be continuous communication between the centre and the field on the problems of the curriculum, teaching methodology, textbooks and evaluation techniques. Unless we get constant feedback from the field we are likely to be out of touch with the actual teaching-learning situation of the classroom. Therefore, my final request to the participants is that we must be in constant touch

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8 Malla, 1977.

with one another and with problems and perhaps learn about the problems of our profession from one another.

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English Language Teaching in Tribhuvan University

Introduction

This paper is an analysis of the English language teaching situation in Nepal and Tribhuvan University's role in it. It is a search for perspective on the university's past efforts, the present problems and future prospects of English teaching at the post-secondary levels. As such, the paper is likely to be disappointing to those who expect it to deal with elevated academic disciplines such as 'English Studies'. However, one will need a great deal of moral courage to claim that 'English Studies'—in the sense understood in academic circles all over the world—exist in Nepal. Nor is this the only reason why one would like to shy away from 'English Studies' as a theme. In terms of the priorities set by the development planners of Nepal one would not know where an elitist academic discipline such as English Studies would stand. All the same it looks as though the English language is going to stay with our higher education for a long time to come. A mundane business though it may be, English language teaching, therefore, deserves a thorough review, particularly if higher education in Nepal is to be more effective.

The withdrawal of British power from the Indian subcontinent has been a crucial factor in the changing status of the English language in the educational set-up of the whole South Asia, including Nepal. Till the 1940s and 1950s, even in secondary schools English language and English curriculum occupied an important place. Many SLC candidates voluntarily opted for English as the medium of examination for all subjects other than Sanskrit and the vernaculars. At the post-secondary

levels the status of English, both as the medium of instruction and examination, remained unquestioned till the 1960s. When Tribhuvan University was incorporated by law in 1959, the University Act envisaged that by 1974 Nepali would be adopted as the medium of instruction and examination. However, the Act also provided that:

> English may continue to be the medium of instruction and examination in such subjects and for such period not exceeding 15 years or for such longer period as may be prescribed by the Statutes from time to time if the Government, on account of the exigency of circumstances, specify so by notification in the Nepal Gazette.[1]

Although vernacularisation of higher education is one of the declared policies of His Majesty's Government, not much inroad seems to have actually been made to dislodge and substitute English at the operational level in the last 17 years. Tribhuvan University has taken a modest initial step by allowing the use of Nepali in the classroom and the examination hall. But, there seems to be still a long way to go to dislodge English from higher education completely either as a medium of instruction or medium of examination. The status of English in higher education is certainly changing, but one does not yet know whether it is for the better for the cause of the Nepali language. The language which is apparently replacing English is not Nepali, but a pidgin[2]—the technical words from English in Roman script yoked together by the violence of exigency into a seemingly grammatical Nepali framework.

Between the promulgation of the Tribhuvan University Act in 1959 and the introduction of the National Education System Plan in higher education in 1972, the progress made on the vernacularisation front has yet to be documented. But the National Education Plan proposes to leave the status quo undisturbed:

> The medium of instruction in the higher educational institutions will

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1 Tribhuvan University Act, 1959, Chapter II, Section 4 (pha) (unofficial Translation).

2 Stewart, 1968, p. 532. Stewart defines 'pidgin' as a 'particular kind of linguistic development àwhich derive (their) vocabularies from one source, but (their) grammatical structures from another'.

> remain as of now pending alternative arrangement by His Majesty's Government.[3]

Even if the pending alternative arrangements do arrive in good time, English is unlikely to face the threat of banishment from Nepal's educational system. English may not stay as a medium of instruction or of examination after 1984, but nothing in the foreseeable future is likely to change its present status as the first foreign language. Among other things, we are going to need English (a) for the acquisition and transmission of science and technology, and (b) for international communication. Neither of these roles is likely to be fulfilled by the Nepali language. In a world already stepping into the last quarter of the twentieth century, Nepal cannot afford to remain isolated from wide contacts and exposure. Diplomacy, tourism, foreign trade, foreign aid, travel and higher studies abroad are only the manifest forms of such interactions. But at the deeper levels of exposure, arts, literature, music, fashions, ideas, attitudes and values are flowing in and out through the code of language. Hitherto, English has almost solely been our medium of international contact, exposure and communication. However, lately French, German and Russian among the European languages and Chinese and Japanese among the Asian languages are being studied by assiduous Nepalis. But the status of English as the language of science and technology and of international communication remains unassailable.

The National Education Plan has defined the main object of higher education as 'the production of trained manpower'. Technical education has been given priority over general education. The Plan states:

> Technical education will receive special emphasis with a view to meeting the needs of technical manpower for successful implementation of the National Plan.[4]

The Plan approaches higher education primarily as an investment in training technical manpower required for development plans in Nepal, and Tribhuvan University has been assigned the sole responsibility of

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3 Ministry of Education, 1971, p. 29.
4 *The National Education System Plan*, p. 9.

producing this manpower. The very first year of the implementation of the Plan saw the founding of six technical institutes in Tribhuvan University. As the language of science and technology, effective acquisition of the English language is going to be a primary prerequisite for the promotion of technical education. It so happens that even in the most advanced countries of the world, such as Sweden and the Soviet Union, more than 80% of scientific research is published in the English language. Even a country as affluent as Japan is confronting the problem of market for expensive books produced in Japanese translation. In our part of world, the economics of book production has been a prohibitive factor in the vernacularisation of scientific and technical education. In Britain alone, some 35,000 new titles are published every year. Some 1,500,000 pages are printed every day in the world, out of which 50% is in English. Even if the infrastructure of translating and publishing agencies in Nepal were fast, effective and efficient enough to cope with a fraction of this world output in English, even if the lexicon of the Nepali language were rich in technical vocabulary, there would be the problem of cost, time-lag and, above all, of the market for sophisticated scientific literature in Nepali.[5] We shall have to learn English, not because of its prestige utility, particularly in the face of our own limitations—material as well as non-material.

If our commitment to the promotion of technical education is a logical consequence of our commitment to the goal of national development, English language has to be considered as a factor in national development. It is a basic communication need for the acquisition and transmission of science and technology and for international communication, including the acquisition of ideas and values so necessary for accelerating the modernisation process. No matter what label we use—the first foreign language, one of the UN languages, lingua franca, language of wider communication, reference language, library language—English is indispensable for any system of education in Nepal that is committed to the training of technical manpower.

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5 In 2026 BS, the total number of titles in Nepali language, mainly literary ones, was 5,000. Madan Pustakalaya, 2031. The Madan Puraskar Library reportedly has now a total holding of 7,800 Nepali language titles. Karki, 1974, p. 430.

A Perspective

When Tribhuvan University started to prescribe its own syllabuses and conduct its own examinations in 1960, there was not much to choose between Patna and Tribhuvan University. This is particularly true of the English syllabuses at the Intermediate, Bachelor's and Master's levels. These syllabuses were almost entirely literature-based, and what language component there remained was mainly traditional translation, precis and grammar-based. The syllabuses were related neither to the student's actual language abilities nor to their future language needs. They were based on two questionable assumptions:

i. Literary English is the only specimen of English language worth teaching because literature is the finest specimen of language.
ii. Learning to critically appreciate literary diction, style, forms and notions is the main aim of an English syllabus.

The first steps to break away from this tradition of literature-based compulsory English syllabuses were taken when Tribhuvan University formed its own statutory Board of English Studies in 1960. Under the Chairmanship of Mr Soorya Bahadur Shakya, the then Head of University Department of English, the Board met several times to discuss curriculum innovation in English. Finally, in its meeting held on Jestha 8, 2020 (May 1963) the Board took a very significant decision:

> The need to separate the teaching of language from the teaching of literature is felt to be an urgent one. It is decided that while English language should continue as a compulsory subject in undergraduate classes (except in BSc) English literature should be made an optional subject for Intermediate and Bachelor of Arts and Education Examination.[6]

The Board of English Studies framed new English syllabuses—splitting the old university courses into the non-elective (General) English language course and the elective (Special) English literature courses. The new courses were introduced from 1964 for the Intermediate and Degree students taking their finals in 1966. Although the shift of

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6 Minutes of the English Board of Studies, 2020 BS (typewritten).

emphasis from literature to language was a step in the right direction, it remained a half-hearted step. For one thing, the General English syllabuses still contained a good deal of literary material though Poetry and Drama, Shakespeare, in particular, was deleted. The language component comprised such exercises as amplification of a set topic, essay, substance, precis, translation, and, of course, grammar. A major achievement of this phase in the English curriculum development was that the pattern of examinations set for compulsory English changed noticeably from the old essay-type critical appreciation or explanation to short answer type as well as to questions designed to test comprehension. But the literary bias continued. For example, the General English Syllabus for Bachelor of Arts Examination stipulated that

> A passage of recognised literary merit (will be set) to test the candidates in the English way of thinking and expression.[7]

Although both the syllabuses and examinations were a compromise with the persistent literary bias, the need for change had already been perceived by the Board of English Studies. That the new syllabuses were a compromise is obvious from the Report on the Implementation of the New English Syllabuses. The following is a part of the official summary statement:

> Finally, it was felt that change-over from the formal Grammar-Translation method of teaching English to the structural pattern was necessary and salutary in the light of the latest trends of methodology of teaching foreign languages, as pointed out in papers and remarks by participants from abroad. For the present, however, the old pattern must needs be permitted to co-exist with the new to suit the requirements of the syllabuses already prescribed by the Board of Studies till 1966.[8]

'Structural Pattern' or 'the latest trends of methodology of teaching foreign languages' must have been an impressive set of words in 1964. But, in

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7 Tribhuvan University, 1966, p. 3.

8 'Report on Seminar on Objectives and Methods for Implementation of the Courses of Study for the IA, ISc and BA Examinations of Tribhuvan University, 1966'. Malla, p. 84.

the overall context of professional standing of the college teachers of English in the early 1960s, adopting a structural syllabus would have been a vision—desirable, but a distant one. In 1964, among the college lecturers in English there were hardly two or three who could possibly tell a structural syllabus from the ones which had no structure. As for acquaintance with the methodology of foreign language teaching of any kind, apart from a few dozen secondary school teachers trained locally by Westcott, Michael Doyle, John Doney, Robert Jordan and James McCafferty of the British Council, or a couple of college lecturers who were recently back from Britain or the United States, almost everyone was an MA in English literature. Introducing structural syllabuses at this stage would, therefore, have been rather like trying to get blood out of carrots.

However, an important stimulus arrived on the scene in the form of a couple of reports on English teaching in Nepal. David Rathbone, UNESCO Specialist in English Teaching, submitted copies of his report[9] to the Board of English Studies in August 1967. The report created a distinct impact partly because it was the first systematic statement on the situation, though too sketchy on higher education. In March 1968, Vice-Chancellor Sardar Rudra Raj Pandey sought the expert opinion of the British Council on the problems of English standards which might deteriorate with the proposed vernacularisation of higher education. The British Council submitted to the Vice-Chancellor a brief but stimulating statement of issues and recommendations.[10] The Rathbone Report and the British Council paper provided Tribhuvan University with a useful framework for discussion on the problems of English teaching. In September 1968, a committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Principal Soorya Bahadur Shakya to hold a national conference of college teachers of English. The conference,[11] held at Kirtipur on 28th-30th October, 1968, was not only the first of its kind on the teaching of any university subject. Within the limited time and resources at its disposal, the conference succeeded in driving home to its 50 participants the urgency of change in English syllabuses—both at the Intermediate and Bachelor's levels, in the methods of teaching

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9 Rathbone, 1967.
10 Malla, 1969, pp. 79-82.
11 Malla, 1969.

and examination. The conference discussed not only the generalities, but also the specifics of English teaching. It recommended specimen syllabuses and examinations among other things. The conference was held on the basic assumption that something should be done at the college level without waiting too long for reforms in secondary English, particularly SLC English.[12] So, the conference emphasised the need to take up a crash programme of remedial nature at the Intermediate level till such time as the English teaching at the school level, particularly SLC English, becomes more effective.[13] For the first time the conference also made it clear that college teachers of English should be trained properly before introducing new structural or remedial syllabuses for them to be able to handle them efficiently.

The conference was, on the whole, well received in university circles as well as in the local press. This, however, does not mean that every one of the college teachers of English was happy about its proposals. For instance, in a not too disguised attack on the conference and its sponsors, Y.P. Verma wrote:

> The purpose of higher education—the education at college level—is to transmit the spiritual and cultural inheritance of man and liberate individual learners. Language training of elementary kind is useful and important, but it is so at primary through High School levels. At the level of higher education it is a mark of degeneration and deterioration... In this age of heart transplantation some of us have come to believe in the transplantation of task and goal by seeking to shift the training in language from Primary through Secondary school to college classrooms. The idea that language training at college level will improve and raise standard is bound to cause intellectual bankruptcy... The romantic restlessness to abandon what is currently practiced in the higher education of the country and introduce a new type of courses of study

12 'Undoubtedly, the best thing would have been to improve the SLC English. But in all likelihood the SLC English will not seen any change in the next decade or two.' Malla, 1969, p. II.

13 '...the Colleges must accept the responsibility (to teach English) if the schools can't or don't do it at the moment. The time will come, we hope it will come very quickly, when schools will be able to do the job properly, in which case this basic remedial course, if you like to call it that, can be replaced by one of a higher standard.' Rathbone in Malla, 1969, pp. 13-14.

> in English and new system of examination combined with a new method of teaching may have all the charms and interests of romantic fancy for the things remote,... but it also carries with it the hazards of romantic adventure.[14]

The sponsors of the conference were accused of 'the intellectual dishonesty of thrusting schools courses upon college students in the name of raising standard'.[15]

In September 1969, Dr Alan Davies of Edinburgh University joined Tribhuvan University as Professor and Head of English Department under a five-year contract between the British Council and Tribhuvan University. During his two-year stay, Dr Davies ran three short-term vacation courses in Applied Linguistics for the college teachers of English. Nearly 100 teachers attended these courses. Personally for me and many of my colleagues it was the first exposure to Linguistics, particularly to Applied Linguistics. Without making any alterations whatsoever in the literature component, Dr Davies also introduced some Theoretical and Applied Linguistics in the Master's syllabus. In fact, he did not tamper with literature syllabuses at any level. The linguistics component he introduced in the Master's syllabus is still with us, and the graduates of the Department feel that they have been greatly benefited by the course. However, the major contribution of Dr Davies consists of the Intermediate and Bachelor's General English syllabuses. They were framed basically on the outline recommendations made by the First National Conference of College Teachers of English in 1968. In framing the syllabuses, introduced from 1971, the Board of English Studies under the Chairmanship of Dr Davies was guided mainly by the following considerations:

i. General English is a compulsory not a specialist or optional subject. It must therefore cater for a wide variety of standards in English.
ii. College students face many problems; good teachers of English are

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14 Verma, 1962.

15 A certain Ram Shanker Upadhyaya wrote from Biratnagar mentioning, 'It is ludicrous to think that standard of education in Nepal or any other part of the globe can be improved by changing syllabus at college level study. It is just one of the ways of evading the problem, deceiving the people and above all an example of intellectual dishonestly.' *The Rising Nepal*, February 19, 1969.

not easily found; the general standard of English in the colleges, especially in the first intermediate year, is not very high.

iii. College students need, above all, a remedial course in English as a foreign language, a course that will, if possible, provide some access to contemporary spoken and written English.

iv. College English teachers have not, in the main, been trained for teaching such a course.[16]

An interesting feature of the Davies syllabuses is that they prescribe some English language newspapers and magazines—local, Indian and British, as specimens of contemporary English, as 'a good source of the normal, non-specialised English which the course sets out to teach'.[17] In framing the courses, Dr Davies was influenced, above all, by two sets of personal findings: i) his experiences with the college teachers of English during the three vacation courses he organised; and ii) his preliminary investigation of English proficiency of some 1000 students of six colleges in the Kathmandu Valley, including three postgraduate university departments. He found that no group of students scored 360, i.e., the required minimum proficiency, and that 'at the best estimate an average score of 360 will not be reached until the 10th year'.[18]

The new syllabuses and textbooks were presented for discussion and criticism before the college teachers who attended the vacation courses that Dr Davies ran. But, in the English teaching profession, as in other walks of life, much depends upon attitudes. Thus, even the pious vacation courses in Applied Linguistics did not go uncriticised in the columns of *The Rising Nepal*. For instance, SN Verma, and erstwhile college lecturer in English, thought that the course was organised to bring the college teachers to task as scapegoats for the unpunished failings of secondary teachers of English. Verma wrote:

> Neither the schools nor the colleges are ready to shoulder the responsibility of this deterioration. Rather they try to cast aspersion upon one another for the existing state of affairs. And it seems that the

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16 A Short Guide for the Teachers of the 1973 General English Syllabuses IA/ISc/ICom/BA/BCom, 1973, February, p. 1 (mimeograph).

17 Explanatory Note on the New General English Intermediate and Bachelor Syllabuses, undated, p. 7 (mimeograph).

18 Davies and Kansakar, 1971, p. 52.

> Vice-Chancellor as the captain of the university education in the country has most humbly and voluntarily offered to take this responsibility upon himself. But he has indirectly shifted this blame to college teachers.[19]

While a number of younger teachers[20] received the Davies courses favourably, they were not short of critics and detractors. In an inflammatory piece, Taranath Sharma wrote:

> Contrary to the conventions of the University Dr Davies swept the whole English Courses aside and introduced a thorough linguistic pattern from the intermediate level to the Master of Arts level...Dr Davies prepared a list of very easy textbooks for Intermediate and Bachelor classes. The textbooks he has prescribed are fit for the seventh and eight classes of our schools. After putting down the very edifice of English teaching in Nepal by introducing books quite below the standard and depriving us of the charm whatsoever of the job of an English teacher Dr Davies silently withdrew from the scene...Our students and teachers are being made guinea-pigs, etc.[21]

Dr Davies was succeeded by Dr Hugh D. Purcell of Belfast University, to chair the Department of English, in October 1971. Dr Purcell came from a background quite different from Dr Davies'. In February 1972, Dr Purcell published 'First Impressions of Nepalese Higher Education in English' where he wrote:

> I am bound to start by saying that, in world terms, the standard of English here strikes me as comparatively high...Better English is spoken at Tribhuvan University than at any university in the Middle East...and that goes for the whole of South America, most of Africa, and all of Far East, with the exception of Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines.[22]

Not that Dr Purcell was critical of his predecessor's work. One of his

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19 Verma, 1970.

20 See Subedi, 1971; Pyakural, 1972; and Kansakar, 1917. For criticism of the syllabuses see Verma, 1971; Verma, 1971, 3 instalments; and Tripathi, 1971.

21 Sharma, 1972.

22 Purcell, 1972b, p. 11.

memoranda 'To All Teachers of English at the Certificate and Diploma Level in the Kingdom of Nepal' clearly points out that

> The (Davies) syllabuses, while necessary, lacked certain features. There was too heavy and emphasis on the type of English used in the Subcontinent; there was no spoken English taught; and there was little reading material of a general literary nature. All these shortcomings have now been supplied, and what has resulted is a new and graded syllabus which has gained new features without discarding the former ones.[23]

With Davies' critics Dr Purcell agreed that

> Ideally,...Dr. Davies' text-books are suitable for the secondary schools. Unfortunately, he found when he arrived that a majority of the students at the higher educational level were below that standard where English was concerned. Hence his introduction of the textbooks. Now that the whole of the education system is being overhauled, we have suggested that those textbooks should be phased out within four years.[24]

Dr Purcell's contribution to English teaching in Nepal during his three-year tenure might as well be summarised in his own words:

> My own contribution to the proposed semester-system course in English has been the *Situational English* series, sponsored by the Government of Australia which I regard as the best for teaching spoken English in the entire world...We have...proposed that a fair amount of literary material, suitably graded should be brought back.[25]

Dr Purcell left Nepal in December 1974, and his claim to having

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23 Purcell, undated.

24 Purcell, 1972a.

25 Purcell, 1972a. Purcell did not lack convinced followers on this point. See for instance, Yadav, 1972, where Yadav wrote, 'Our obvious choice (as a model of spoken English) would be the R.P. accent if only we could attain it...I am glad that the present English Syllabus Committee headed by Dr. H.C. Purcell has realised it, and has consented to introduce the Series called *Situation English* which has had an immense *(sic)* success.'

contributed to the semester system course in English remains to be assessed. Three months later when the English Subject Committee (under the Chairmanship of Dr Mohan Lohani who took over the Chairmanship from Dr Purcell) met, the very first item the Subject Committee chose to delete was the *Situational English* series.[26]

Problems

With the implementation of the National Education Plan, the English language teaching situation at the lower secondary and secondary levels has emerged into clearer relief. For instance, the English curricula and textbooks are better structured, presented and written than in the past. The curricula are more explicit, detailed and, hopefully, manageable in the given teaching-learning situation. The credit, no doubt, goes to the Curriculum Development Centre and the Education Materials Production Centre, Ministry of Education, and His Majesty's Government. There is, of course, room for improvement in both textbooks and curriculum. Yet, comparatively speaking, English teaching at the school level has made some definite headway. But, it is worth remembering that curricula and textbooks are just a set of inputs of English teaching: vital, no doubt, but only a set among several necessary inputs. The other equally crucial inputs are the teacher, the teaching method, the teaching situation and, above all, the techniques of evaluation and measurement of language proficiency. The two variables which have continued to remain most uncertain are the teacher, particularly his professional competence, and the teaching situation, particularly the classroom size. This applies as much to the university as to the lower secondary and secondary levels of education.

The National Education Plan prescribes the teaching of English as 'one of the UN Languages', both at the lower secondary and secondary levels (4+3=7) years at school.[27] If His Majesty's Government is fully committed to this programme, that is to say, committed to finance all the required inputs, including the training of some 716 English teachers at lower secondary and secondary levels and the recruitment of 450 trained English teachers, the prospects for the teaching of English at the school level looks certainly very bright. But, as things stand presently, if the

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26 Minutes of English Subject Committee Meetings, 1975.
27 See Malla, 1975, pp. 91-101.

19% pass rate from Chitwan and Kaski, the two districts where the Education Plan has completed a full cycle, is an index of any significance, we do not yet have much elbow room for unguarded optimism. In the ten years, between March 1964 and January 1974, the Ministry of Education appears to have trained, in 18 batches of different levels and numbers, a total of 665 secondary and lower secondary English teachers. However, the Ministry's 1974 survey revealed that only 400 out of 665 have stayed on to teach English. In the current session,[28] out of an estimated 1116 English teachers, 716 are untrained. During the Fifth Five-Year Plan Period (1975-80)[29], the targets in primary, lower secondary and secondary education are mainly for expansion rather than consolidation. The Plan proposes to expand the enrolment of students and recruitment of teachers in the following proportions:

Level	Additional Enrolment	Ratio	New Teachers to Be Recruited
Primary	302,300	64% of the primary school going-population	8,710
Lower Secondary	368,500	50% of primary enrollment	3,250
Secondary	147,400	40% of the lower secondary enrollment	900

For English language teaching in general and teacher training in particular, the implications of this programme of expansion of educational opportunities are likely to be far reaching. In the first place, by 1980, there will be some 450 newly recruited English teachers to be trained in addition to the backlog of 716 untrained teachers of English. Consequently, the Ministry should be prepared to train 1200 teachers of

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28 Available statistics for Falgun 2032 BS Session show the following picture:

Level	*Schools*	*Enrollment*	*Teachers*	*Number of English Teachers (Estimated)*
Primary	*8677*	*649,247*	*19,543*	X
Lower	*2223*	*196,293*	*7225*	*720*
Secondary	*515*	*74,132*	*3338*	*396*
Total				***1116***

29 National Planning Commission, 1976, Chapter 29, pp. 467-69.

English in the next three years, that is to say, twice as many as it has been able to train in ten years!

Tribhuvan University, on its part, will soon need to make up its mind about retaining or phasing out compulsory English at Certificate and Diploma levels. The problem before Tribhuvan University is an obvious one: can Tribhuvan University ignore the actual English language proficiency of the secondary school graduates and admit university entrants on the face-value of SLC English? Or, must Tribhuvan University ignore the face-value of the SLC English and admit only those who are filtered by a rigorous English proficiency test? In which case there will be no need for Tribhuvan University to duplicate the efforts of teaching English all over again through remedial or crash programmes. Unfortunately, the University is at present opting for all the three alternatives. In the first place, the University is administering Entrance Tests in English which do not filter out those who are deficient in English. Secondly, the University recognises the SLC, including its English, at its face-value. Thirdly, the University is duplicating the teaching of English language by means of remedial and crash courses, particularly at the Certificate level. This certainly does not appear to be an economic approach to the teaching of English. For one thing, the duplication of efforts is wasteful, and the duration of the English language teaching programme is almost unendurably long.

The time has come when Tribhuvan University should have the will to assert that if English language teaching is acknowledged as the job of secondary schools, they should do it properly. The University should have the academic right to reject unfinished products through stiff English language proficiency tests. At any rate, policy-makers on education will soon need to do something to eliminate the enormous wastage of time and resources incurred in terms of the 11-year cycle of compulsory English language teaching at lower secondary, secondary, certificate and diploma levels. It has cost Tribhuvan University Rs 4 lakhs to administer entrance tests in 2031 BS, i.e., the tests which did not filter out any linguistically deficient entrants. One does not know how much it costs Tribhuvan University to run compulsory remedial and crash English language programmes for these SLC graduates.

Pending a consequential policy decision on English teaching at the national level, the review of Tribhuvan University's efforts in this direction makes it clear that the University, with its limited resources, has not yet been able to focus its attention on more than two inputs, piecemeal and in

isolation from the rest of the pre-requisites of English teaching. In the first place, right since the early 1960s the University has been focusing its attention on curriculum reform, which more frequently than not had meant replacing one set of textbooks with another. For example, almost all the complaints from the field are about textbooks, their length, various degrees of difficulty, availability in the local market, etc. This often results in the game of replacing Tweedledum by Tweedledee. In the process of deflection, addition, substitution and extra-position of textbooks, the Board of English Studies or English Subject Committee's considerations are not always explicit. After having read through all the decisions of the Board of English Studies, all the English syllabuses and all the available recorded complaints against them, one becomes acutely conscious of the prevalence of no small degree of ad hoc-ism in the exits and entrances of textbooks and courses in English. Secondly, the University has been, within the limitations of its material and human resources, alive to the urgent need of re-orientation of its English teachers. It has, during Dr Davies' tenure, organised three short vacation courses for college teachers of English. Secondly, the University organised a highly successful summer training-cum-workshop programme for teachers of English in collaboration with the SIL staff in 1975.

The pressing problems which English teaching in Tribhuvan University is facing are more general ones, i.e., the problems which higher education as a whole is facing. These are the problems of

i. Low English proficiency of average university entrants/secondary school outputs;
ii. Over-crowded classroom; this in spite of the Education Act which prescribes 40 students as the maximum per classroom;
iii. The teacher:student ratio in subjects such as English; the National Education Plan prescribes 1:15 as the ratio in higher education; in English language classrooms the ratio works out as 1:105;
iv. Persistence of the traditional lecture method;
v. Paucity of facilities, such as a well-equipped library on the campus;
vi. Academically uninspiring atmosphere on the campus;
vii. Lack of professional motivation and commitment in the teaching community.[30]

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30 See Malla, 1975, pp. 15ff.

These are some of the generic problems of higher education in Nepal—the problems which are shared by teaching and research in any subject. There is some unreality in examining English teaching in Nepal in isolation without referring to these problems. English teaching suffers from these problems more severely than most subjects because whereas one can lecture on Economics or Biology to a crowd, one cannot teach English or language skills to a crowd. His professional limitations apart, the English teacher has to survive in the stifling environment of our classrooms which are more like mass meetings than a group of learners.

The more specific problems of English teaching are, however, equally disabling ones. To begin with, English teaching in Nepal is operating in a vacuum. There is an almost total absence of reliable and supporting evidence either about the actual uses of English in the country or about the actual level of English proficiency of any level of learners. At present,

both are unredeemed terra incognita: the so-called English language needs of the country and the so-called low 'standard' of English. We do not have even preliminary studies on the English language needs of Nepal in terms of field investigation of the use of English in Nepal.[31] At the other end, we need supporting evidence about our English language proficiency and achievement through group and sample studies. Systematic studies of problematic areas in learning English, such as diagnostic tests, contrastive analyses and error analyses are urgent needs.[32] Year after year, for decades we have been talking of 'deteriorating standard of English'. On all accounts, by now, we should already have sunk to the bottom of linguistic deprivation. But, we rarely produce any piece of systematic, documented, and, above all, comparative evidence other than isolated impressions from the examination scripts or home assignments of our students. 'Standard of English' is a tricky label, and the question of deterioration remains merely an informal theme for comments in the staff common room. This amounts to confessing that we, the English teachers, are hitherto groping between two stretches of darkness: the uncertainty of uses of English and the uncertainty of 'standard' of English in Nepal.

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31 Tribhuvan University Department of English had supervised some relevant papers and for these see Sharma, 1974 (unpublished MA thesis); Thapa and Sthapit, 1971; and also Verma, 1975 (unpublished PhD thesis, Tribhuvan University).

32 Some spadework has been done by Kansakar. See Kansakar, 1973, pp. 1-9.

Recommendations

The National Education Committee should consider an enlightened policy decision on English language teaching in Nepal. The main consideration should be that duplication and unnecessary wastage of scarce educational resources should be avoided. English teaching should be considered primarily in terms of an effective, intensive and integrated programme of acquiring a foreign language. Tribhuvan University's responsibilities in this enterprise should be defined precisely.

Should the Education Committee decide to continue teaching English both at the lower secondary and secondary levels, Tribhuvan University should discontinue teaching English language, particularly of remedial nature, and the recent crash/bridge intensive type courses should be phased out in the next few years. Tribhuvan University should rather concentrate on the teaching of specific registers and specialised varieties of English, such as technical English, legal English, medical English, differing from institute to institute.

Should the University decide to phase out the present syllabuses, the University must develop English proficiency tests and administer them to University entrants, completely rejecting the face-value of SLC English. Those who do not score the minimum should also be required to take diagnostic tests. The secondary schools or the Ministry of Education should set up permanent and/or mobile infrastructures of tutorial system for teaching remedial courses for these failures in English.

On the other hand, if the National Education Committee decides to make the University share English language teaching with secondary schools,[33] three-four years at the secondary level and two to four semesters at the Certificate level, the Ministry of Education and Tribhuvan University should jointly set up an English Language Institute for developing curriculum, teaching materials, teaching techniques, tests, and, above all, for orientation and training of secondary and university teachers of English. The most important thrust should be towards an integrated and coordinated programme.

In any case, funds should be available to finance two full-scale research projects: i) Proficiency and Diagnostic Studies among learners of English at different levels; and ii) A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Use of English in Nepal. Who uses English in Nepal? When does one use

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33 See Osmania University and the Central Institute of English, 1969.

English? What kind of English does one use and for what purpose? Surveys of these questions in terms of speech events, register analysis, role-relationships and the domains of social intercourse will be an invaluable source of data for a correct perspective on the relevant needs of English in Nepal. Surveys covering the use of English in education, in the ministries, corporations, foreign aid and international agencies in Nepal, in tourism, official publicity materials, the radio, airports, banks, travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, bars, shops, newspapers, bookshops, book-production, face-to-face social interaction (such as cocktails, talks, seminars and formal lectures) will, hopefully, yield field data which will help establish the very first facts about the needs and relevance of English in Nepal. These archives can be a very useful index to our actual English language needs. This, in turn, can provide surer feedback information for our English teachers, curriculum designers and textbooks writers.[34]

The following areas are recommended as potential themes for small-scale pilot projects: i) Lower Secondary English Curriculum (Grade IV to Grade VII); Secondary English Curriculum (Grade VIII to Grade X); Certificate Level English Curriculum; Diploma Level English Curriculum; ii) English Language Textbooks, Lower Secondary to Diploma Level; iii) Tests and Examinations in English at various levels; iv) English Teacher Background and Motivation; particularly at the University level; and v) Teaching-Learning Situation and its impact on English language proficiency.

Tribhuvan University should organise at least one training-workshop on the specifics of English language teaching of not less than four to six weeks' duration every year. More scholarships, fellowships, travel grants, exchange programmes and other funds should be available for professional updating of the teachers of English.

Tribhuvan University's English Subject Committee at the centre and English Instruction Committees in the field should be activated to meet and deliberate regularly. The Subject Committee should not be bogged down by trivialities. It should provide leadership in English teaching through initiative and innovative ideas in the field of curriculum teaching methodology, test construction, evaluation techniques, textbook production and, above all, in research on all these areas. The Subject

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34 English Department Research Proposal, March 1970 (typewritten).

Committee should be a regular forum for ventilating to attend to trivial complaints from the campuses.

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III

Literature, Grammar, and Translation

LITERATURE, CRITICISM AND TRANSLATION

III

8

Classical Newari Literature

Although the high culture of the Nepal Valley has been a literate culture for the last millennium and a half, classical and hybrid Sanskrit appear to have been its main code till the AD 1350s. The entire corpus of Licchavi epigraphy is in Sanskrit. Extant early Nepalese manuscripts dated between AD 920 and AD 1350s are in Sanskrit. As late as AD 1383 plays written in Sanskrit were staged in the court.

Vernacularisation of the literate culture took place at first in epigraphy (to reach the populace?) and then in manuscripts. Hodgson[1] hypothesised that the switch to the vernacular took place because of the decline of Sanskrit learning. Bendall[2] and Petech[3], on the other hand, suggested that the patronage extended to the Newari language since the AD 1380s was an offshoot of a literary renaissance. This may be part of the explanation. The literate culture of South Asia was to undergo a transformation after the rise of the New Indo-Aryan languages (ca. AD 1000). Some of the earliest vernacular texts were found in the Nepal Valley. After the advent of Islam in India (AD 1193-97) the arrival of fugitive southern immigrants in Nepal had been a regular feature. The flight of Maithil King Harisimha Deva (AD 1325) to Nepal had left a powerful impact, not only on her social and political life, but also on her literary life. The rise of classical Newari literature is one of its consequences.

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1 Hodgson, 1828.
2 Bendall, 1903.
3 Petech, 1958.

We do not know when the Newari language was committed to writing. The earliest dated inscription in the language is dated NS 293 (A D 1173); the earliest authentically dated manuscript in the language is *Mānavanyāyaśāstra* (NS 500/AD 1380). However, in the running Sanskrit texts of Licchavi epigraphy (AD 464-879) there are numerous identifiable Newari nominals—a fact which indisputably proves that Newari-speakers had been inhabiting the Nepal Valley much before the Sanskrit-using Licchavis arrived. Besides, the word *Newāra* is of no great antiquity. Its earliest incidence in the local sources goes back to NS 672/ AD 1652. It is simply a colloquial or Prakrit variant of Sanskritised classical 'Nepāla' (ca. 4th AD). The Capuchin missionaries who arrived in Nepal in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and the 19th-century British authors such as Kirkpatrick, Hamilton and Hodgson popularised the term *'Newāri'*. The language, however, was called 'Nepāla Bhāṣā' in manuscripts dated since AD 1380 and inscriptions dated since AD 1410.

Following Jorgensen, the term 'classical Newari' is used here as a descriptive term, not as a term of literary or critical evaluation, to refer to the older dialects of Newari used mostly in manuscripts dated ca. AD 1360-1900 (i.e., before modern Newari was set to printing).[4] For the purpose of this paper, the term 'literature' is used not in the restricted sense of *belles lettre (Kāvya)*, but in the sense of written texts *(vāṅgmaya)*, including *śāstras*.

Classical Newari literature exists in all the three major genres—prose, poetry, and drama. It began as a bilingual literature of translation and commentary in prose under the court patronage of Jayasthitirāja Malla (AD 1382-1395). The earliest group of manuscripts belongs to this period.

The largest number of classical Newari manuscripts belong to prose genres; the smallest to the genre of drama (24 in all). It is estimated that there are some 1600 secular and religious compositions in verse. Only a fraction of these texts have come out in print. Most of these texts are scattered in Nepalese and foreign collections (the National Archives, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Berlin and Leningrad libraries), and in some private collections such as Prem Bahadur Kansakar's.

In prose, there are three species of texts: i) technical prose *(śāstras);* ii) narrative prose (i.e., religious texts, mainly Hindu *purāṇas* and Buddhist

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4 Jorgensen, 1936, 1941.

avadānas; didactic narratives, such as *Hitopadeśa*, and popular narratives such as *Vetālapaúcaviṃśatikā*, *Sukabahatari* and *Battisputtalikā)*; and iii) Historical prose *(vaṃśāvaliīs* and *thyāsaphūs)*. With the exception of historical prose, all species of classical Newari prose literature are modelled on Sanskrit originals as translation, commentaries and free recensions. Popular and Buddhist texts, on the other hand, are recensions which take considerable liberties with the Indian models, often adding various local elements, flavour and stories in the process of rendering into Newari. As a literary medium, classical Newari does not exhibit a high degree of creativity, cultivation, refinement and sophistication in prose as it does in poetry.

The repertoire of classical Newari poetry is by far the richest of the three genres. This is so also in terms of the exploitation of verbal resources and creative use of the language. The total range of themes, feelings, sentiments and attitudes in the corpus of poetry is indeed fairly wide. Love songs, ballads, working songs, Krṣna songs and various other species of religious poetry are the leading genres. The earliest poems go to the AD 1570s.

Classical Newari dramas are based on stories from the epics and *purāṇas*. Nearly all of these were written by the Malla Kings during the 17th and 18th centuries. The structure and techniques of these plays were 'in essentials a part of an old and pervasive type which was to be found from Kathmandu to Cape Comorin'.[5] Some of their elements were 'directly obtained from the Maithili dramas popularized by Vidyāpati Thakur'.[6] The most predominant interest in these plays are mimetic, musical and operatic (mime, music and dance) rather than strictly dramatic (plot, character, conflict and crisis). A number of these plays are strings of songs with no intervening dialogues—all set to traditional archetypes of *rāgas* and *tālas*.

Classical Newari literature exists mainly in the form of manuscripts—some 1000 manuscripts written in older dialects and scripts. They have not yet been even adequately catalogued. So, scholars have hitherto ignored them. This literature may not be of outstanding merit, but it deserves to be studied and analysed before one passes any judgment on the tradition.

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5 Hein, 1972.

6 Mishra, 1949, p. 25.

Out of some 500 dialects and languages of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages, Newari is one of the five languages with a literary tradition of some age and merit. Although Newari is a Tibeto-Burman language by stock, its literary dialects are deeply influenced by the Indo-Aryan dialects, models and traditions. Just as Newar social and cultural systems are products of a fusion of two streams, classical Newari literature is the most tangible evidence of the symbiosis between a Tibeto-Burman language and the Indo-Aryan literate culture.

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9

Amritānanda's Grammar AD 1831

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of scholars, particularly Nepalese scholars interested in the work of native grammarians, to an early 19th-century word-and-paradigm grammar. The work is entitled 'Grammar of the Newari language, Composed for Mr. Hodgson, Amrita Nanda Bandya'. It may be of interest and some significance for Newari and Nepali scholars alike. This is so because word paradigms and verb patterns are given in three languages—Sanskrit, Nepali and Newari—in three separate columns. In the colophon the author describes his work in the following words:

devabhāṣā: pa:rvatiyā
bhāṣā nepālika tathā//
śabda liṅga bibhaktyādi
kartri karma kriyābyaṃ// Folio 36a

There are Newari words in roman transcription with English glosses all over the manuscript. Some notes on significant points of Newari grammar are given at the end of the work. There are no such notes, glosses, and transcriptions for the Sanskrit or Nepali columns. Obviously, Hodgson had it composed to learn the Newari language. Sanskrit and Nepali columns seemed to be presented as reference materials.

The Manuscript

The manuscript is deposited in the India Office Library, London, among the Hodgson papers (Hodgson Collection, Volume 82, Group 28, No. 2). Written in Devanāgarī script on Nepalese yellow paper measuring 12.5 cm x 20 cm, it consists of 38 folios. Folios 1b, 2, 3, 31b, 33b, 37a and 38b are blank. Most folios have marginal notes and English gloss for Newari words and sentences in Hodgson's hand. Folios 37b and 38a have crammed notes on significant points of Newari.

The manuscript is dated. The date of composition is given at three separate places: folio 1a, folio 36b in Sanskrit, Newari, and Nepali. It is also given in three eras: Nepāla Saṃvat, Vikram Saṃvat, and Śaka Samvat.

> nepāla samvat 951
> śaka samvat 1753
> vikram samvat 1888
> jeṣṭha śudi pratipadā: folio la

The manuscript was thus composed some time in June 1831. Both Sanskrit and Newari colophons contain additional information that the work was composed for Hodgson: *nepāladeśe sāheba hādsanam choka:tala* (Folio 36a).

The Author

Amritānanda Bandya was a Newar Buddhist scholar from Patan on the service of British Residency in Kathmandu in the early nineteenth century. The British authorities came to know of his erudition in 1815 during Amritānanda Bandya's visit to Bodha Gayā where he confronted the paṇḍās in a scholastic dispute over the identity of the Buddha's footprints.[1] He was Hodgson's chief source of information on Nepalese Buddhism and its literature. Hodgson acknowledges this debt to the Nepalese scholar in the following words, 'Amritananda Bandya (was the) most learned Buddhist then, or now, living in that country'.[2] William Wilson Hunter, Hodgson's biographer, elaborates on this point:

> Hodgson arrived at his materials for this part of his work by a prolonged process of inquiry from learned Brahmans and Buddhist priests. He had

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1 Shakya, 1978, pp. 294-295.
2 Hodgson, 1874, p. 65.

the good fortune to attract the friendship of the greatest pundit in Nepal—a friendship which grew into a reverential affection on both sides. This erudite Buddhist, Amrita Nanda by name, was himself the author of several treatises in Sanskrit and one in the Nepalese dialect. He presented the highest type of the ancient native scholar, courteous, dignified, a well of learning, and with a memory so capacious and perfectly trained as almost to do away with the need of manuscripts. The questions which Hodgson put to him and Hodgson's commentaries on his replies, opened up unknown regions of research to the Western World.[3]

Amritānanda is the author of a number of works in Sanskrit and Newari. He won for himself a reputation as 'the Redactor of Asvaghosa's Buddhacarita'.[4] In 1828/29 Amritānanda added four lost cantos (Cantos XIV-XVII) to Asvghosa's poem.[5] When Cowell translated the poem into English and published it in the *Sacred Books of the East Series Vol XLIX* he included Amritānanda's cantos as 'an interesting literary curiosity'.[6] Hodgson translated two of his works: 'A sketch of Buddhism, derived from the Bauddha Scriptures of Nepal',[7] and *Nepāliya devatā: kalyāṇa Paúcavimśatikā:*.[8] More recently, Brough translated and published 'Nepalese Buddhist Rituals—a short work by Amritānanda'.[9] Amritānanda's *Dharam Kośa Saṅgraha*—a kind of guide to Nepal's holy shrines composed for Hodgson in Nepāla Samvat 946 (AD 1825) has come out in print from Delhi.[10] The following are works of Amritānanda traced so far:

1. *Chandomrtalata: A Work on Sanskrit Metrics*[11]
2 *Sanskrit-Newari Lexicon*[12]
3. *A History of Nepal in Sanskrit, Parbatiya, and Newar*[13]

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3 Hunter, 1896, pp. 273-274.
4 Bendall, 1893, p. 620.
5 Vogel, 1972, pp. 210-217.
6 Cowell, 1894, æPrefaceÆ.
7 Hodgson, 1828b, pp. 222-237.
8 Hodgson, 1843/1857.
9 Brough, 1948, pp. 668-678.
10 Shakya, 1978, pp. 295-296.
11 Hodgson, 1874, p. 14; Bendall, 1883, p. 76; and Mitra, 1882, p. 79.
12 Raghavan, 1949, p. 264.
13 Ibid.

4. *Virakusa:vada: na and Divya:va:da:na* Newari translation dated N.S. 947[14]
5. *Carapati's Avalokiteswara Stotra* (Newari translation)[15]
6. *Description of Bodha Gaya*[16]
7. *Names of Caityas, Buddhist Temples and Buddhist Divinities*[17]
8. *Divinities in Tibetan Mandala*[18]

Amritānanda was born in the family of Abhaya Rāj Shākya—the founder of Patan's famous Mahāboudha Temple. The family seemed to have made significant contribution to the 19th-century literature of Nepal by writing in Sanskrit, and Newari and Nepali alike. Amritānanda was the first son of Ramānanda and Jaya Laxmi. Ramānanda was the *hākim* (chief) of the Durbar Library till 1852. Amritānanda's younger brother, Sundānanada, was the author of *Triratna-saundarya Gāthā:* and the Nepali translator of *Rājadharma*.[19] Viswānanda, Amritānanda's son, wrote poems in Newari. Guṇānanda, Amritānanda's grandson, was the co-author of *History of Nepal* edited by Wright (1877). Guṇānanda also compiled a Newari-Sanskrit lexicon for the Russian Buddhist scholar Ivan P. Minayeff in 1875. It was later published by Conrady (1893). As Residency pundits the descendants of the family, Indrānanda and Mitrānanda, had assisted Bendall and Lévi in their literary, historical and archaeological researches.

Until 1947, the family descendants held the office of Residency pundit. In recognition of their learning, a scion of the family held special privileges in the service of the Durbar Library.

The Sponsor

Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800-1894) studied Bengali at the East-India College in Haleybury in 1816-1817. While at college Hodgson showed a remarkable disposition to learn oriental languages.[20] In 1818, during his first appointment in India, Hodgson had studied Sanskrit and Persian at the newly established (1800) College of Fort William, where he left 'a

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14 Mitra, 1882, p. 274.
15 Cabaton, 1905, p. 159.
16 Raghavan, 1949, p. 264.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Hunter, 1896, p. 22.

reputation for proficiency in Persian'.[21] J.A. Ayton, who published *Grammar of Nepalese Language*, was the Assistant Professor of the Arabic and Persian languages at Fort William. With his passion for languages, it is impossible that Hodgson could have missed Ayton's book.

Hodgson was only 31 when he sponsored Amritānanda's grammar. Three years earlier he had published a paper in which the Tibetan affinity of Newari was established for the first time in the history of linguistic studies. In the same paper he lamented the fact that

> The Newari tongue has no dictionary nor grammar: nor is its cultivation ever thought of by those, numerous as they are, who devote their lives to the sacred literature of Buddhism.[22]

Hodgson's youthful observation is perceptive, but only partially true. As for a dictionary in Newari, there existed several different versions of *Amarakośa*, a bilingual Sanskrit-Newari lexicon spaced between Nepāla Samvat 501 (AD 1381) and the nineteenth century. There were also different kinds of lexicon, such as medical glossary *Bhesajnāmāvalī* NS 697 (AD 1577/78), *Dhanañjaya Kośa* NS 795 (AD 1675). However, nothing resembling a grammar of the Newari language written prior to Amritānanda's has so far been traced. Hodgson's observation on this ground stands undisputable. Possibly, it was very much to redress this lacuna that Hodgson seemed to have inspired Amritānanda to compose the work.

Contents of the Work

Amritānanda's work is hardly a grammar in the usual sense of the word. It does not even resemble 'traditional' grammar. For example, there are no rules (*sūtra*), nor any meta-rules (*paribhāṣā:*), nor any definitions of grammatical terms. Terms for gender and number are merely listed, but not defined (folio 8a). On folio 27 the role of prefixes (*upasarga*), particularly in changing the meaning of verb-roots, is briefly mentioned. The rest of the work is only lists of words belonging to different parts of speech, word-paradigms for nouns, pronouns, verbs and a few adjectives. The core content of the work consists of verb patterns. The

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21 Hunter, 1896, p. 32.
22 Hodgson, 1828a, p. 409.

entire work can, therefore, be characterised as 'Newari in/through Tables'.

In order to have a broad idea of the contents of the work, an outline summary of the topics covered in given below:

1. Invocation and colophon (folio 1)
2. Vowels and letter (f6); script—Nāgarī and Newari (f7-18)
3. Number, gender and case-endings (f8)
4. Vocabulary: animate, inanimate and adjectives (f9)
5. Comparison (f10)
6. Personal pronouns, demonstratives, relative pronouns, singular/plural; simple/respect forms (f10-13a)
7. Verb Patterns: Indicative, present, past, future; imperative; subjunctive; conditional; potential; (f13-18b)
8. Verb Patterns: Causative; Verb+gerund; Verb+participle; Participles alone negative construction with stative and copulative verbs (f19a-22b)
9. Future (f23a)
10. Verbs: seek, write, say, search, weigh, am, pass, over, divide (f22b-25a)
11. Adverbs and postpositions (25b-26b)
12. Prefixes (f27)
13. Sentence Modifiers (f28)
14. Interjections (f28b)
15. Adverbs of manner (f29a)
16. Postpositions and adverbs in use (f29b)
17. Particles (f30a)
18. Texts: Story A Sanskrit (f30b); in Nepali (f31a): in Newari (f31b)
    Story B in Sanskrit (f32a); in Nepali (f32b); in Newari (33a)
    Story C in Sanskrit (f34b); in Nepali (f34a); in Newari (35a)
19. Colophon in Sanskrit and Newari (f36a), in Nepali (f38a)
20. Hodgson's notes (f38b and unnumbered folio)

Some Tentative Observations

Amritānanda's grammar presents several points of interest. The three-language approach to the Newari language was adopted presumably at Hodgson's request rather than on the author's own initiative. Since both Sanskrit and Nepali were familiar to Hodgson, he was trying to learn a

third language by applying the commonsense principle of learning, i.e., from the known to the unknown. However, one immediate consequence of this approach is sheer wastage. The display of Newari data in terms of Sanskrit language—in terms of its inflections or morphology—entailed a number of wasteful and repetitive paradigms. Newari words and verb patterns are merely listed against their approximate Sanskrit equivalents. Since no two languages correspond exactly in terms of all the systems and structures, another negative consequence of this approach was the failure of the paradigms to bring into relief those features of Newari inflection, morphology and syntax which are not shared by Sanskrit, e.g., the role of classifiers, the distinction (basically hierarchic) between animate and inanimate, between human and non-human, and between respect and non-respect nouns in Newari.

The presentation of Newari grammatical information in terms of paradigms and patterns, with no rules or generalisations whatever, leaves the data entirely to induction or to the insight of the analyst. Grammar is neither all induction nor all insight. This is obvious from Hodgson's notes at the end of the manuscript, where he labours through it only to bump into some interesting generalisations as well as false generalisations. For example, on the basis of the data presented in Amritānanda's grammar, Hodgson concludes:

> Adjectives before nouns as *bānlā: misā*: a fine woman
> No Change of them (adjectives—kpm) for gender or number as *swamo bānlā: misā:* 3 fine women, or case generally, but as in 3rd (case—kpm) as *bānlā: misāng*
> Degrees of comparison as
> Special forms imply addition of word
> No definite article
> *(ma) banal mochā:* Ugly boy *bānlā: misā:* pretty girl *yā: to dālo tapu kathing* struck great stick with suggesting only any
>
> This is just as the structure really runs save that by it a verb comes at the end of all. folio 38

Hodgson's false generalisation is painfully evident in his placement of the negative particle *ma* before *bānlā:*, rather than between the two morphemes *bān* and *lā:*, producing the unacceptable form *ma-bānlā*.

Given the state of the art of 'field linguistics' in the early nineteenth century, Amritānanda's work does not look indefensible. Apparently, there was no methodology of systematic presentation of the data or the regularities of an undescribed language before the twentieth century even in the West. Approaching one language in terms of another has been a persistent tradition in the writing of grammars. Amritānanda's, too, uses the basic framework of primary grammatical categories and presents their inflection and morphology in terms of secondary grammatical categories (gender, number and case for nouns; comparison for adjectives; tense, mood and aspect for verbs). One positive feature of the work is the conjugation of verbs in sentences so that the interaction of different categories can be generalised. Equally interesting feature of the work is the presentation of three narrative texts—enabling the analyst to examine forms and functions of word in intratextual relations such as anaphoric relations and sentential modification—all carefully glossed over and marked in Hodgson's hand.

Brough was unsparing in his remarks on the grammatical competence of Amritānanda.[23] Of course, there are reasons to be critical if one measured the rampant scribal vagaries in Nepal (where printing was introduced in the 1870s only) against the rigour of modern Western textual scholarship. However, it is equally useful to remember that 150 years after Amritānanda's grammar or 50 years after Shukra Raj Shastri's first printed grammar of the Newari language (1928), there is as yet no reliable reference grammar of the language. Nor are the present Newari orthographic practices in Devanāgarī any less chaotic than the scribal inconsistencies of the manuscript age.[24] Therefore, there is not much point in being harsh in our response to the orthography of Amritānanda. In fact, his work is unusually good for Nepalese writing. Though not free from errors and carelessness (for example, on folio 11a the Sanskrit singular accusative for 'he' is given as *tye* instead of *tam*; the nominative for 'they' is given as *tye* instead of *te*), the Sanskrit tables and paradigms are fairly consistent in writing.

In the Nepali portions, too, writing is on the whole consistent (for example, in the use of *ṣa* for *kha* all through). The indecisions are there (for example, between i and ī, between *ḍh* and *dh*). In the Newari portions,

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23 Brough, 1948, pp. 668-669.
24 Tamot, p. 1979.

whereas *o* and *wa*, *na* and *ṅa* are used as interchangeables, *ra* and *la* are not. The data evidently represents Patan dialect (*jimisen* for *jimisan* in Kathmandu). The text retains the medial and final consonant (s) or consonant-initial syllable—some of which are lost in modern Newari.

Conclusion

It is difficult to guess how the Nepali portions of Amritānanda's grammar will be received by the Nepali-language scholars and historians of the language—assuming that it is published in the future. The earliest printed grammar of Nepali written by a Nepalese is Jaya Prithivi Bahadur Singh's *Prākrit Vyākaraṇa*, published in 1912. Pant reported the existence of a grammar of Nepali written by Birendra Keshari Aryal, vaguely dated between 1888 and 1905.[25] Acharya has recently located a manuscript which is unsigned and undated but assumed to be Birendra Keshari's grammar.[26] With due verification, it deserves to be published. In the meantime, on the basis of the available materials it seems that Amritānanda's grammar is not only the earliest attempt at the grammar of the Newari language, but also the first known grammar of the Nepali language attempted by a Nepalese scholar.

The manuscript is also an interesting deposit of Nepal's cultural history. The signing of the Treaty of Sugauli in December 1815 brought in an active presence of the West in the heart of an otherwise pristine Kathmandu. The manuscript presents a glimpse of the interaction of two traditions of learning: the Eastern and the Western. Here is an erudite Nepalese scholar trying his best to present the data of his hitherto unstudied language as systematically as possible for the scrutiny of an inquisitive Western scholar. Fully committed to empirical tradition, the young scholar, on his part, is visibly groping to unravel the mysteries of the language by inductive reasoning—mainly by identifying the observable surface regularities. It is pointless to be too harsh on either. For neither was a Pāṇini.

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25 Pant, 1961, p. 23
26 Acharya, 1977.

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10

Asian Literatures in Translation: Prospects and Problems

Translation has played no small role in the literary and cultural history of many a nation. In Asia as well as in Europe, intellectual renaissance arrived on the trail of works translated from non-native classics of literature, religion and philosophy. At least two examples are worth citing from Asia. China has one of the most ancient and self-contained cultures in human history, going back to several millennia. Yet, when Buddhism arrived in China in ca. AD 50 from Central Asia, the cultural landscape of China began to change steadily, so much so that the spread of Buddhism gradually reduced the ranks of the Taoists, and Taoism lost ground in the controversies between the followers of the two beliefs. The impact of Buddhism under the Liang Dynasty was so great that Emperor Wu Di (502-549) retired to a Buddhist monastery and became a novice. The introduction of Buddhism not only brought with it a new type of music, dance, musical instruments and architecture, but also enriched China's artistic heritage by creating works such as the Thousand-Buddha Grottoes at Tun Huang. During the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, Buddhism was officially supported by the State through numerous pilgrimages and missions in search of Buddhist canonical texts and their official translations. These translations of Buddhist sutras, which continued from about the middle of the fourth century AD to the end of the seventh century AD, enriched not only the Chinese literature, but also the Chinese language.[1]

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1 Weber, 1951.

Tibet furnishes us with the example of a different process of cultural enrichment through the medium of translation. The Tibetans adapted a northern form of the Indian Gupta alphabet after the accession of Srong-brtsan-sgam-po (AD 629-649), apparently for the translation of Indian Buddhist works. 'Using entirely their own linguistic materials, (the Tibetan literati) produced a highly complex religious and philosophical vocabulary, capable of rendering in faithful translation the whole vast range of Sanskrit Buddhist literature, and usually so accurate that modern European and Indian scholars are able to reproduce an adequate reconstruction of any lost Indian Sanskrit work from its Tibetan translation. This is made all the easier in that, by the early ninth century, the Tibetans had drawn up lists of fixed equivalents for the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist terms into Tibetan...From then onwards the conventional equivalents, carefully taught by one generation to the next, have been used unerringly up to the present day'.[2] In the religious history of Tibet, the translator was a kind of cultural hero, held in so high respect that his name is invariably recorded, second only to that of the patriarch of different sects. Between AD 775 and 1665, hundreds of names of Tibetan translators *(lo-tsa-ba)* and their Indian or Nepali collaborator are recorded in religious histories with great reverence. In fact, their labour of love had transformed Tibet from a wild, pastoral and warring tribal land into a heartland and seat of 'northern' Buddhist religious culture and art.

Nor can one forget the fact that original though the great period of the English Renaissance—often somewhat inaccurately called the Elizabethan Age—may have been, it has its roots in a multitude of ancient or foreign influences. It was a fertile soil enriched by a thick layer of translations. Many of the great classics, both ancient and modern, had been translated into English by 1579. Many translations enjoyed as great a popularity as if they had been original works. North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579) was one of the most important formative books for Shakespeare's generation. So were the translations of Montaigne's *Essaies* and Homer's *Iliad*. Apart from being a major stimuli, these innumerable translations helped to make supple the prose and verse of English writers, enabling them to create one of the most versatile and glorious periods of literature in any language.

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2 Snellgrove and Richardson, 1968, p. 76.

In Asia, the spirit of the Renaissance, intellectual as well as literary, particularly in the vernacular languages, started fairly late. Prior to the advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent, the great apostolic religions of Buddhism and Jainism had elevated the status of Pali prakrit as the language of the gospel. The New Indo-Aryan dialects and speeches were beginning to emerge as literary languages by AD 1200-1500. When the great naval powers of Western Europe—England, France, Spain, and Portugal—launched out in the 15th-16th century to colonise the Asian and African continents, contacts between Western civilisation and Eastern cultures began to intensify. The impact of the West on the East, in the last four hundred years, has been particularly through its science, technology and industrial civilisation. With all these, a host of social, economic, political and philosophical-cultural constructs have penetrated the East. One of the most important intellectual-cultural constructs to penetrate the East is the literature of the West. There is now hardly any part of the Asian continent where Western literature is not read, studied and taught avidly. If it is not in Dutch, English or French, much of it is in translation in one of these languages.

The arrival of the older or modern classics of Western literature has been one of the leading stimuli for the transformation of native vernacular literary traditions, wherever such exist. The transformation seems to manifest itself in three ways. In the first place, there is the impact of Western ideas. Ideas travel fast. They arrive, when they do, through more than one avenue. Positivism, liberalism, Marxism, existentialism, psychoanalysis, romanticism—all have influenced literatures of Asia. Secondly, there are typical Western literary genres such as tragedy, the short story, the novel, personal essay—to name only the most prominent ones—which begin to flower with the development of cultural contact with the West or through translation of Western classics. Finally, there are typical Western styles, e.g., modernist, post-modernist, montage, stream of consciousness, collage, avant-garde, experimental, surrealist, symbolist, etc, which make their appearance in vernacular or local literature as soon as such stylistic models begin to be available to broader stratum of writers and poets through easily accessible translations in the languages of the region. This catalyctic role of the contact with Western thought and literature, in original or translation, has changed the course of the literary history of Asian languages more radically than the contact with the adjoining or cognate languages or literatures

in the recent past. This has been mainly the legacy of the colonial past in Asia when this continent was held down, not only economically and politically, but also intellectually and culturally.

This cultural landscape has changed a great deal since World War II. Many nations in Asia, old and new, have awakened from their past bondage into the new horizons of promise and anxious future. Our cultural ties with the West have been such that we have always tended to look up to New York, London and Paris for cultural and intellectual green signals, as the periphery looks to the metropolis, at times resulting in 'a great danger of there being a revolution without transformation, that is to say the whole of the past forms being rejected and a disastrous kind of modernism like Futurism being introduced which has no relation to the past whatever'.[3] Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel-laureate and nationalist poet of India, wrote of the predicament of India when faced with Western civilisation, in the following words:

> Now the door has opened to the West
> and gifts in hand they beckon and come—
> they will give and take, meet and bring together,
> none shall be turned away
> from the shore of this vast sea of humanity
> that is India.

Asia may not want, or be able, to close its door to the West any more, but it should at least open its door to itself. By accident or by design, the centuries-old presence of the colonial powers in Asia has kept it apart from its own sub-cultures, languages, religions and cognate cultures. Today, there are more Indians who know English or French than those who know Tibetan or Japanese. Time seems to have come when this cultural-linguistic barrier of self-negation should be crossed by means of creative efforts from either side of the barrier, wherever they exist, and in our own way with 'gifts in hand' we need to come together to 'give and take meet and bring together' what little we can offer, to one another.

It is said that the proper study of man is man. One is tempted to say that the proper study of an Asian is another Asian, of Asian literatures, cultures and peoples is an agenda which can no longer be ignored,

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3 Spender, 1957.

particularly because many countries of this continent have lived through a common history and many more are facing a common destiny in the future. There is nothing more authentic than the literature of a country—literature in the broadest sense of the term—including much that is committed to writing—which holds up the mirror to a people—to their penumbra and backdrop, their landscape, both outer and inner. It is in this context that we need to admire the Toyota Foundation's vision and courage, not to speak of its noble generosity, to have launched the Know Our Neighbours Translation-Publication Programme in 1978. Although it was initially limited to the translation into Japanese from South-East Asian languages works in the humanities, social sciences and literature, the programme now includes 150 titles in SEA languages to be translated into SEA languages and 43 titles from one SEA language to another SEA language, the largest translation programmes launched within recent years outside the English-speaking world or the Soviet Union. At the same time, it is also a reliable index of increasing interest of Asians in the literatures and languages of fellow Asians. Because this programme is likely to become more and more popular, gaining increasing momentum as we accumulate more experience, we had better discuss some of the critical problems we are likely to confront in the future and share some of the experiences we have already had.

The translation programmes sponsored by the Toyota Foundation involve several languages. The complexity of the problems will be evident if one looks at the programme from the perspective of the languages involved. For example, some 150 titles are going to be translated into Japanese directly or otherwise from the following languages: Burmese, Thai, Indonesian, Malayasian, Nepali, Newari, Tagalog and English. Some 67 titles are to be translated from Japanese into Indonesian, Malayasian, Nepali, Newari, Maithili, Sinhalese, Thai and Vietnamese. About 43 titles include translations of Thai into Tagalog, Dutch into English, English (on Thailand) into Nepali, Newari, Vietnamese, Chinese Sinhalese, Malayasian and English into Thai from among the titles published in South-East Asian countries. Apart from English and Dutch, there are 11 languages involved in translation relationship with Japanese, either as Source Language or as Target Language. Indonesian, Tagalog, and Malayasian apart, these languages belong to the Austro-Asiatic (Thai and Vietnamese), Indo-Aryan (Nepali, Maithili, and Sinhalese), and Sino-Tibetan (Chinese, Burmese, and Newari) families.

There is a great deal of truth in the dictum that no two languages can serve as adequate substitutes. Each language is a particular whole, with a particular lexicon, a peculiar syntax, and a peculiar morphology. A people's individuality is conveyed by the language: its vocabulary, morphology and syntax, its idioms, metaphors and analogies, diction, and pronunciation. Pronouns, salutations, the enumerative systems, sex attitudes, taboos and kinship terminology are so many indexes of the uniqueness of a culture. Because a language functions as a code by which a community maintains its historical continuity, it is a complete depository of the entire socio-cultural history of its speakers through time. That is why the major interests and preoccupations of a given people are directly reflected in language, so that there are 6000 words in Arabic for camel, 800 words for architecture in Newari, twenty different ways of describing sand dunes in the Sahara, dozens of words for snow and shades of white in Eskimo.

Some linguists go further and claim that a language is a powerful determinant of what its speakers perceive and categorise, how they think what they think about among the myriad possibilities. That is to say, if Aristotle had spoken Chinese his logic and his categories would have been different. American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf thinks that each language is, for its speakers, a sort of readymade spectacles whereby they see the world and a readymade set of formula whereby they state and interpret and live with what they see.[4] Each language has had its 'metaphysical world-picture' as it were, built into it over the ages, and it tends to impose itself anew on posterity. However, linguists now feel that Whorf's position was exaggerated. Languages are doubtlessly structured differently and they lexicalise meaning, or a particular aspect of reality, differently. One language may lexicalise (or provide a word for) a meaning that is not lexicalised in the other. For example, English has no separate words for mother's sister and father's sister and uncle's wife, nor any separate words for brother's son/daughter and sister's son/daughter, but many South Asian languages have a separate word for each of these kinsmen. This is the reason why we so often face the problem of semantic incongruence or lexical deficiency when we look for word-for-word translation between two languages. This problem is likely to be less acute in the case of cognate languages belonging to the

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4 Benjamin Lee Whorf, 1971.

same language family—depending, of course, upon the time-depth of divergence between the two languages.

Translation involves two languages: one from which the text is translated and the other into which it is translated. The first is called the Source Language (SL) and the second is called the Target Language (TL) or the Receptor Language (RL). Catford defines translation as 'the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (RL).'[5] According to Nida, 'translation is a process in which a person who knows both the source and the receptor language, decodes the message of the source language and encodes it into an appropriate form of the receptor language'.[6] Thus, whereas Catford considers translation as 'replacement by equivalent textual material', Nida considers it as 'encoding into an appropriate form'. This shows that modern linguists have not moved too ahead of Cicero (106-43 BC)—the great Roman statesman-orator—who already wrote nearly two thousand years ago, 'Translation should be free; translation should be faithful'. Though it may sound paradoxical, the two words—free and faithful—seem to sum up the essence of the translator's agony. If he is too faithful he is likely to be somewhat mechanical and dull like an unimaginative housewife; but if he is too free he is likely to be somewhat like a promiscuous wife. It seems the basic problems involved in translation are at least four:

i. What are the different *levels* of meaning in the SL text?
ii. How are these to be decoded from SL *and* encoded into RL?
iii. Can the *whole* meaning of the SL text be transferred?
iv. It not, what are the linguistic and cultural problems involved?

We often meet difficulties in translation, but we never totally fail to translate from one language to another. There may be no exact equivalence, but languages are never totally different, that is to say, totally different in the functions they perform. According to Jakobson's model of verbal communication, there are altogether six factors involved, and each of these factors determines a different function of language. The verbal structure of a text, and much of its meaning, primarily depend on

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5 Catford, 1965, p. 20.
6 Nida, 1969, p. 488.

the *predominant* function. These six factors and their related functions in verbal communication according to Jakobson are:

Context/Referent
Message
Addresser Contact Code Addressee

These six *factors* are the bases of a corresponding scheme of six main functions of language:

Referential Poetic
Emotive Phatic Metalingual Conative[7]

The meaning of a text, or a part of the text, depends upon the *predominant* speech-function a text is performing at any time. For example, in scientific and technical texts, it is the *referent* factor which is most important, and therefore the referential function and referential meaning are correspondingly the most important ones. But, in poetic texts, on the other hand, it is the focus on the structure of the message which is the most important one. It is not the logical, cognitive, referential or denotative meaning of the poem which is most important. Otherwise a Shakespearean sonnet would have been just as good as its prose paraphrase. Wordsworth (1770-1850), an English Romantic poet, wrote a number of 'Lucy Poems'. One of these begins with the following stanza:

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

If we paraphrase this stanza as 'I was not afraid because I was not conscious, and she seemed to be an object beyond the effect of time', we still retain the referential meaning, but we will have murdered the poetry.

If translation is a process of replacement by equivalent meaning from one language to another, the perceptive translator's primary task is to determine the nature of the speech function as well as the nature of

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7 Jakobson, 1960.

meaning of which he has to find equivalents. Conceptual logical-cognitive-denotative meaning is undoubtedly the *most* important type of meaning that language communicates. But there are *other* types of meaning. The most important among the other types of meaning are: connotative meaning (the meaning of an expression *over and above* its purely conceptual meaning); collocative meaning (or idiosyncratic property of individual words, e.g., '*pretty* girl' but '*handsome* boy'); affective meaning (reflecting the personal feelings of the speaker/writer to the listener/reader, and the subject-matter); stylistic meaning (e.g., the differences between the following two sentences: After casting a stone at the police, they absconded with the money; they chucked a stone at the cops, and then did a bunk with the loot); thematic meaning (e.g., the difference between the following two: A man is waiting in the hall; there's a man waiting in the hall; or between: the minister made a speech after dinner; it was the minister who made a speech after dinner; it was after dinner that the minister made a speech; the minister made an after-dinner speech; a post-prandial speech was made by the minister, and so on). An 'ideal' translation would be one which translates *the whole communicative value of a text* into another language, not just translation of sense by sacrificing other types of meaning-equivalences. The difference sense-equivalence is maintained in preference to other meaning equivalences.

How are, then, the different levels of meaning to be decoded from the SL and encoded into the RL? It seems that the process of translation is one of progressive selection among categories and items in the target language that are recognised on contextual criteria as equivalent to categories and items in the source language, each category and item having a set of potential equivalents on a scale of probability. That is to say, the nature of this equivalence is not formal or structural, but contextual. It is not formal correspondence that we accept as translation. We do not judge by whether each grammatical category has been replaced by its nearest formal equivalent, one clause always being rendered by one clause or an active verb phrase always by an active verb phrase. Translation is a relation between two texts whose fidelity is judged by reference to the communicative and contextual value, not by reference to one-to-one equivalences at the level of morpheme, word, phrase, clause and sentence. The translator, in fact, may never consciously formulate equivalents below the sentence. The problem of

decoding and encoding different levels of meaning is minimum in scientific translation because an important aspect for scientific translation is that, of all the registers of language, technical terminology has the highest probability of one-to-one equivalence in translation. Languages, of course, do vary a great deal in the extent to which they have scientific registers which are institutionalised. In the case of literary texts, on the contrary, the translator has no institutionalised language register or terminology to draw upon. Poets and novelists would not always be working within convention of restricted language-types. Besides, the translator will need to look 'beyond sentence boundaries' to guide him in the choice of equivalents. This is why, it is often said that the ultimately valid linguistic unit in a work of literature is 'the whole text'.

Reliable translation begins only when there is a vivid awareness of the difference in structure between the two languages, a sense for their different functional and stylistic stratification, and the ability to overcome these differences by one's own expressive devices. In other words, a good translator understands the original work thematically as well as stylistically, overcomes by his own means of expression the differences between the two linguistic structures, and reconstructs the stylistic structure of the original work in his translation. Instead of mechanically translating sentence after sentence, a translation which is alive considers the whole work and then attempts to determine the function of the *individual* components in its structure.

Can the whole meaning of the original be transferred in the translated version? The answer to this question can only be relative—depending upon the nature of the work in question. If the work in question is a highly complex stylistic structure such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), with a predominant component of dialogues written exclusively in the local dialect, the translating difficulties are likely to be far too great. Or, if the semantic or symbolic structure, such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1992) is too complex and rich in cultural symbolism the translator may not be too at ease. Imagery, symbols, myths, idiom, slang, regional/social dialects and other restricted codes, too, are problematic areas of translation. The problem of capturing 'the whole meaning of the original' is most acute in translating poetry and other personal forms of writing which are loaded with figurative language. 'There are two ways of rendering a poem,' wrote Sri Aurobindo, India's

great mystic and poet, 'one is to keep it strictly to the manner and turn of the original; the other is to take its spirit, sense and imagery and produce them freely so as to suit the new language'.[8] Opinions however, vary among the authorities.[9] For example, 'We should aim at recreation, and not reproduction' (Richard Lattimore); 'to translate a poem whole is to compose another poem' (Jackson Mathews); 'in translating, the original matter must be recreated and yet remain recognizably the same' (Justin O'Brien); and 'the translator is a literary artist looking outside himself for the form suited to the experience he wishes to express' (Renold Poggioli).

Let me illustrate the complexity of the task of the translator, particularly the translator of Japanese poetry from English into a third language. A few weeks ago, the Japanese Literature Translation Committee in Kathmandu met to discuss some of the specimens of the translations done by leading writers and poets in the Newari language. I was asked to evaluate some specimens of the translation of Masaoka Shiki's poems from Makoto Ueda's anthology *Modern Japanese Haiku*. The edition has Japanese text, in Japanese script as well as in roman transliteration with a morphological/grammatical/cultural information and notes in the form of footnotes. The English translations of the poems are given in the body of the page. One such poem read in part:

Yamo-no / yu / ya/ Hadaka / no-ue-no / ama-no-gawa
Mountain's / spa / : / naked-people/above/Heaven's-River
Imoto / ni / gunsho / yomasuru / yonaga / kana
Younger-sister / by / war-epic / have-it-read / long-night / kana

Hot spring in the mountains:
high above the naked bathers
the River of Heaven.

My younger sister
reads me an ancient epic
this endless night.

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8 Sri Aurobindo, 1971, p. 431.
9 Brower, 1959.

My discomfort started immediately with Japanese word *yu* and two English equivalents *spa* (usually a fashionable place with a spring of mineral water where people come for cures of various diseases) and *hot spring*. Secondly, Japanese possessive *yama-no* (mountains' hot spring) has become English locative *hot spring in the mountains*. Similarly, Japanese *hadaka* (naked people) has become English *naked bathers*. Then *ama-no-gawa* is, not only the River of Heaven or the Milky Way, but a literary allusion to the river flowing across the sky where the Maiden Weaver and the Cowherd meet once a year. This connotation is completely lost already in the English translation. Similarly, in the second verse the Japanese passive *imoto-ni* (by younger sister) become English active *younger sister* with an explicit *my;* the perfective event verb *yomasuru* (have-it-read) becomes English stative/present reads. Similarly, *yonaga* (long night) becomes *endless night; gunsho* (war epic) becomes *ancient epic*. When the English version of the Japanese poem is converted into Newari, the poem will read something like the following if re-translated into English:

Hot springs in the mountains:
The naked bathers wash themselves
the River of Heaven.

My younger sister
Reads me an old war epic
this endless night.

One does not know if the spirit of Masaoka Shiki's haiku still survives in this translation at the third remove. Other than the English translation and the footnotes one has no other means to check the accuracy or adequacy of the translations. Personally, I do not know a word of Japanese, and very little about Japanese literature or poetry. For similar reasons I tend to think that in our translation programmes, we must tentatively resist the enticing charms of Japanese haiku and that complex texts should wait until we have competent translators who can work directly from one Asian language into another without the mediation of English or Dutch. I believe legends, folk-tales, fairy tales, straight-forward narratives, etc, may have less of these problems even when they are translated from English.

At any rate, in the case of retranslations from English translations of Asian literature, there are two absolutely vital inputs which are necessary at this transitional period when we do not have direct translators. In the first place, we may need the services of advisers-collaborators belonging to the Source Languages to help the translators in the Target Language(s). Secondly, we may need the aid of simple but sound outlines and thumbnail sketches outlining the phonological, the morphological, and the syntactic structure of the SL(s) and the TL(s), on the one hand, so that the translators may be explicitly aware of the nature of the language problems involved. As native speakers or translating bilinguals they will, of course, have such knowledge implicitly and intuitively. Similarly, dictionaries, thesauruses, style and composition manuals outlining unique features and styles in different SL(s) and TL(s) would be a welcome arsenal of fundamental tools.

The Toyota Foundation and its energetic and vigilant International Division have shown considerable foresight by commissioning an important piece of research on Problems in Translation from Japanese into English in Literature and the Social Sciences and their Implications for Retranslation into Third Languages. Similarly, the medium-sized bilingual (Southeast Asian languages into Japanese) dictionaries funded by the Foundation will serve the role of basic references tools. I hope this is the beginning, not the end, of our efforts which should go on if we are to create a lasting cultural and literary impact which translations have always made in all ages, climes and cultures.

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IV

Culture and Society

COLTRANE AND SOCIETY

11

The Intellectual in Nepalese Society

We are not the doctors, we are the disease.

—A.I. Herzen

This is an essay in enquiry into the poverty of intellect in Nepal. Such an enquiry has become somewhat urgent, because 'intellectual' is one of the most overworked words in recent Nepalese writing. Here, I merely propose to examine the substance behind this shadowy and ambiguous term. Before putting the vague word under the microscope, I, however, feel tempted to make a few commonplace observation about the Nepalese society of which contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia are an offspring and in which they were brought up. The Kingdom of Nepal, as it is today, came into being only a couple of centuries ago. Within the present political boundaries the face of the land presents one of the most bewildering and rugged topographies on the surface of the earth. Three-fourths of the country is covered by intractable mountains, punctuated by pockets of isolated valleys and transversal river-systems. This wild and amazingly unyielding topography has for millenniums shaped the mode of living and thinking—the ecology of the Nepalese people. It was not for nothing that, prior to the advent of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his military campaigns, the face of the land was politically fragmented like a page of graph and was littered with Baisi and Chaubisi principalities. Even today—two hundred years after the founding of the unified Kingdom—the people of Nepal are almost as divided by the conspiracy of geography, reducing the physical, social and cultural

mobility among them to a terrifying minimum, as they were in prehistoric days of the Kingdom. For one thing, the feeble modernising changes that had come to Nepal roughly since the 1850s or the more visible changes that are taking place since the 1950s have been confined to the urban population of Nepal. These changes have rarely percolated through the cities and towns to the small villages and sparsely populated hamlets of the hills, to the river basins, valleys or to the plains of rural Nepal. The 1961 Census Report[1] shows that only 3.6 per cent, (336,222) of Nepal's total population (94,12,996) live in towns. The rest (i.e., 96.4 per cent or 9,076,774 people) live in the villages.

According to the Report, there are only 16 towns in Nepal with five thousand or more population. The Report defines the town as place with urban surroundings, i.e., with high school, college, offices, headquarters, communication systems, mills or factories. Out of these 16 towns, three are in the Valley of Kathmandu, including, of course, Kathmandu the capital with 125,000 souls; eight are in the Tarai plains, close to the Indian border. Only Pokhara and Palpa are in the hills. The remaining 96.4 per cent of the Nepalese live in the villages. They live in social groups where primitive agriculture is the only way of life, and kinship, tradition, religion and attachment to one's home are inviolable principles of social ethics.

The picture of Nepal is less simple and monolithic than it may appear from these commonplace observations. The picture is more variegated as the people inhabiting the land belong to different ethnic stocks and speak some 36 different languages, most of which are incomprehensible to one another. Nepalese society is not only multi-ethnic, but also multi-lingual. There are some 25 autochthonous languages. Altogether these are spoken by 38 per cent of Nepal's total population. Nepali, which is the national language and *lingua franca* of the non-Nepali speakers, is the first language of 51 per cent of Nepal's total population. Then, of the remaining ten major languages of Nepali, Maithili is spoken by 12 per cent, Bhojpuri by 6 per cent, Tamang by 5.5 per cent, Abadhi by 4.7 per cent, Tharu by 4.3 per cent, Newari by 4 per cent, Magar by 2.7 per cent, Rai-Kirat by 2.6 per cent, Gurung by 1.7 per cent and Limbu by 1.5 per cent of the total population, If language is an index of cultural patterns, both material and non-material, these figures alone would show a rich profusion of diversity is Nepalese society.

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1 His Majesty's Government, n.d.

For the emergence of the intelligentsia as a class nothing is more important than the growth of cities and a pre-existing literate population sharing a culture of accessible language. Yet, in Nepal if one had to go back further in history, outside the Kathmandu Valley there were only three regional belts which showed some sporadic phases of cultural efforts. These were Janakpur—the traditional home of Maithili culture; Kapilbastu in Lumbini Zone, and the Karnali basin with its mediaeval kingdoms of *parbatiya* Mallas. However, none of these culture belts has a history which maintains continuity with the present. It is only in the Valley of Kathmandu, with its unbroken historical continuity, where one can see a microcosm of the culture-formula, though already in a fossilised state. It is only the Valley of Kathmandu which seems to have a cultural continuity with the present, consistently based on a broader literate population than elsewhere in the kingdom. In the culture-formula or the power-structure of the Kathmandu Valley, more important than either the settlement pattern or the linguistic diversity is the stranglehold of religions and of their priesthood through caste stratification. The priesthood of both Buddhist and Hindu orders has laid down rules for God-fearing Nepalese, not only for life here, but also for life hereafter. In the last millennium in Nepal there must have been men and women who, in moments of terrestrial euphoria, could have forgotten to fear God, but there was perhaps none who did not fear the priest. The priesthood through the rigid caste system, so magisterially codified by Jaysthiti Malla and given legal authority by Maharaja Jung Bahadur,[2] has been a formidable factor in the social and cultural life of the Sanskritised Nepalese population. This includes the whole of Nepali-speaking society, the Hindu and the Buddhist Newars, and other Sanskritised aboriginals and autochthonous tribes. Though understandably and consistently tolerant towards the co-religions of Buddhism, Bonpo or Shamanism, the power-elite in Nepal has been zealously Hinduist. No wonder that in Nepal only those sections of the population who have assimilated the Sanskrit language (i.e., the Nepali-speaking Brahmins, the Newari-speaking Brahmins, Joshis, Maithili or Bhojpuri-speaking Brahmins—so powerful as court ideologues in the Malla courts) constituted the traditional intelligentsia. For, before the advent of Bhimsen Thapa the languages which served to sustain cultural

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2 Bista, 1970.

and intellectual activities in the Valley of Kathmandu were mainly Sanskrit, Maithili and Newari.

Under the cast structure the Sanskritised Hindu or Buddhist priesthood constituted a class of intelligentsia in their own right. This class has been in existence around the Nepalese courts at least as early as the Licchavis. Apart from their Sanskritisation three things seem to distinguish this class: i) their association with the Court, where they occupied a pride of place as a matter of course; ii) their orthodoxy which they perpetuated in society through their association with, and influence in, the Court, as well as through their authority over plebeian rituals (birth, initiation, marriage, purification, death, etc, and other routine worship); and iii) their intellectuality. It would, therefore, be a great mistake to assume that the function of priesthood in Nepal has been merely to perpetuate itself, by becoming a great ritualistic force, almost always working hand in hand with whatever powers there be in the temporal realm. The traditional Nepalese scholarship was mainly the output of the Sanskritised priesthood in Nepal, and it left its imprint in India, Tibet and China.

In 10th-11th-century Magadha (North India), Nepalese scholars like Ratna Kirti, Virochan and Kanakshree were said to be great names at Vikramshila Mahavihara (University).[3] In 11th-century Nepal, the scholarly achievements must have been remarkable for a Nepalese scholar to be a Dwarpundit (Head of the Department) at Vikramshila Mahavihara, and whose disciples included scholars like Niropalsi Sen (Bengal) and Marpa (founder of Kagya cult in Tibet). At any rate, in the cities of the Kathmandu Valley (mostly in Kathmandu and Patan) there still exist several *bahals* (vernacular for *Vihara*) or quadrangles of civic settlement which were, one upon a time, centres—not only of traditional learning of Buddhism, philosophy, rhetoric, grammar, medicine, occult, Sanskrit, Pali literature—but also centres of apprenticeship in painting, casting, jewellery, and other ancestral arts and crafts. In the wake of the Muslim invasion in North India, Pundit Buddhashree, an outstanding Nepalese Dean of Mahasanghik Sangha of Vikramshila Mahavihara, came back to Nepal with a great many of his books and disciples. It was not an isolated instance, but it was a moment in Nepalese history which naturally reminds us of the Renaissance in Europe. (Incidentally, very

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3 Gewali (undated).

few of the extant Nepalese manuscripts go further than the 13th century AD.) While in these quadrangles *(bahals)* Vajracharyas and Shakyas (the Newar Buddhist priests) were the main tutors, in the *Varnashram* system of Hindu education the tutors were mainly Brahmins—the Newar Brahmins, the Joshis and Acharyas, then the Maithili and *parbatiya* Brahmins. Morally and intellectually, the rest of Sanskritised Nepalese society had been, more or less, in their grip, which, for a long time to come, was the grip of tradition. For, prior to the advent of modern education of Western inspiration, the most influential and articulate sections of the society had been either direct heirs to the traditional priesthood or sections who had felt their presence and had accepted it as a part of the eternal scheme of creation. Thus, the Brahmin ascendancy in the social-cultural life of Nepal was almost a historical necessity. Here, I use the word 'Brahmin' purely as a synonym of the traditional intelligentsia. The Brahmins were not only the scholars who 'annotated and embroidered the sacred texts which guided man's actions towards the highest stage of being (or) … taught the young and counselled the aged to ascend to the experience of absorption into the sacred. There can be no doubt about the *extraordinary intellectual* gifts of the Brahmins. Below the remarkable powerful minds which have created Indian philosophy, on the lesser peaks of analysis, commentary and annotation, the Brahmin mind had developed a subtlety of being men of exceptional cultural refinement and intellectual accomplishment'.[4] In Nepal, a lasting monument to their scholarly accomplishment is the great library of 24,000 manuscripts, originally collected in 1885 by Maharaja Bir Shumsher J.B. Rana. The library is a monument, not only to the achievement of traditional Nepalese scholarship, but also to the limitations of the tradition. Today a bulk of these manuscripts are becoming more and more esoteric, partly because of a bewildering variety of their scripts and their languages (like Sanskrit, Maithili, Newari, Tibetan and Chinese), but mainly because of the antiquated nature of their approach, outlook and of their subject matter. Without the help of a small band of dedicated and well-trained experts these manuscripts are likely to become as inaccessible and perhaps as irrelevant as the Dead Sea Scrolls or the hieroglyphs on the tomb of Tutankhamen. At bottom, the nature of traditional Nepalese scholarship is derivative.

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4 Shils, 1967, pp. 20-21.

The aesthetics of the embroidery, illustration and scripts apart, much of it is exegesis, gloss, commentary and annotation on the authoritative texts. The tradition here is the tradition of transmission of the sacred test, the tradition of conservation or ritualistic continuity rather than of creativity, non-conformism, questioning and criticism. The preponderance of the textual over the critical, of the spiritual over the material, of the abstract over the concrete, of the magical over the empirical, of the didactic over the creative—more than anything else, characterises the tradition of Nepalese scholarship. In a sense, a living contact with this tradition had broken after the rise of the Gorkhali power. What continued was more a routine contact with the past rather than a creative renewal of the tradition to suit the altered contents of Nepalese life after 1769.

In 1769, the Gorkha ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah defeated the warring Malla Kings of the Valley of Kathmandu and annexed it to his extended kingdom. With deep political foresight he made Kathmandu his new capital. Six years later, when he died in 1775, the succession to the throne devolved in many cases on minors whose mothers invariably became the regents. With little experience of statecraft and politics, the Queen Mother could easily be swayed. As a result, throughout the period of regency (from 1777 to 1854) there was internecine power strife for succession. Then, there was the war with China in 1790 and the war with British India in 1814. With the rival houses of Thapas and Pandes—not to mention the other *bhardar* families—striving to come closer to power at least nine government were formed between 1837 and 1846. 'The conspiratorial activities reached the climax with the assassination of General Gagan Singh under mysterious circumstances.'[5] This ultimately set the stage for that fateful midnight of 15 September, 1846, when Jung Bahadur and his brothers staged the carnage of Kot—cleanly washing the power-hungry Nepalese court with a warm bloodbath of true blue blood.

Culturally, the British presence in the Indian subcontinent for 190 years did not affect Nepal very much. Yet, the British attitude to Nepal was simply indefensible. This is so, not because the British 'intervened' in Nepal's internal affairs, but because they showed a cold and consistent indifference to developing Nepal along modern lines. Till

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5 Nepali, 1965, pp. 13-14.

1923, the British were having the advantages of a colony from Nepal without having to run its administration. The British patronage of Jung Bahadur and his successors, the flattering reception that the former had in England during his European tour were certainly glorious phases of Nepali-Britain relationship. Yet, Nepal has nothing for which she should be grateful to the British presence in the sub-continent. In India, the nationalists have always raged against their colonisers, yet the Indian indebtedness to Britain is likely to remain a very complicated chapter in her history. For, it was the British who laid the first foundations for India's colossal efforts at modernisation. In India, the British left an infrastructure for the modernisation of culture—both material and intellectual. They left India with the Indian Civil Service, which is one of the best in Asia; they left India with the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, among others—with a framework of modern academic pursuits and aspirations; they left India with the largest literate population of Asia and Africa outside of Japan; they left India with the longest journalistic experience of any country outside the West; above all, they left India with a network of railways which is probably, outside Japan, the longest in Asia. The British left India after awakening her into literary, social and cultural consciousness of her own greatness. (Think of the Bengal Renaissance, for instance). Indology—not to speak of Western sciences, empirical studies linguistics, sociology and anthropology—is the great legacy of the British. In India, the English language has been an effective instrument in the modernisation of vernacular literatures. English has been an agent of the cultural and psychological metamorphosis of many an Indian mind. Nepal had remained almost totally unaffected by, and deprived of, all these cultural impacts of the British in India.

The actual reason was not merely British unconcern. The reason was, in fact, the deliberate and unenlightened policy of Jung Bahadur and his successors who, under the stewardship of the British in India, had pursued a policy of absolute concentration of power in the family and of total abstinence from political-cultural contacts with the rest of the world. But this policy of ruling inside a cultural iron curtain was not that easy to stick to the letter—at least not for the ruling family. For, as soon as he had consolidated his position in the power-politics of Kathmandu, Jung Bahadur left for Europe in January 1850. He was visibly impressed by his British and European tour. Consequently, he

imported many erstwhile fads into Nepal. (There was that famous story about the national anthem.) He imported the idea of reorganising Nepal's ancient army, the taste for Western domestic aesthetics, including western-style palaces. In many ways, the construction of Thapathali Durbar was the beginning of the end of traditional Nepalese arts and culture. Jung Bahadur was not very highly literate, but he certainly was an astute man to be able to see the secret sources of British power. In order to dive deeper and drink more wistfully from this fountain of world power, Jung Bahadur saw the need to learn the English language. After 1850, such an initiation became a clan need for sustaining and perpetuating the ascendancy of his family. Thus, as soon as Jung Bahadur came home, in 1853 on the ground floor of the Thapathali Durbar he set up a small class under the tutorship of a certain Mr Canning.[6] Mr Canning used to give lessons in English, mathematics and history to Jung Bahadur's brothers and nephews up to Grade VIII. Here, on the ground floor of a Rana palace started the nucleus of modern education of Western inspiration. After almost 30 years of nomadic and fugitive existence these private lessons later became Nepal's first English school, and sometime in 1889 it came to be housed in the Durbar School (so called because of its origin in a Durbar or palace). The high portals of modern learning in Durbar School, however, were not open to the plebeian offspring prior to 1876. The first Nepalese who went to Calcutta and got through the Entrance Examination was Chandra Shumsher J.B. Rana. That was as late as 1884. For decades the school population composed mostly of the *Sat Bhai* and *Satra Bhai Khalak* and their lesser progeny.[7] Nepal became a centre for Patna SLC Examination in 1924, and it was only in 1933 that she instituted her own independent SLC Board.

Of the several marvellous things Jung Bahadur brought home with him, there was a hand-operating printing press, the so-called Vulture Press[8] (a wing of vulture used as a trade-mark of the manufacturer). The Vulture Press of 1851 put an end, though not yet too effectively, to the manuscript age of Nepalese writing. By 1870, there were just two hand-

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6 Bhattarai (undated), pp. 8-9.

7 Acharya (undated), pp. 5-12. See also: Vajracharya, 1959; and Shrestha (undated), pp. 25-30.

8 Devkota, 1967.

operated printing presses in Nepal—owned either by a member of the ruling family or by the family of the Royal Preceptor. It was only in 1912 that the first electrically operated printing press was established in Nepal. By 1950 there were less than ten public presses—most of them only very small affairs. A prerequisite for the emergence of the modern intelligentsia is the printing press with a large-scale production and consumption of the printed word. Yet, in Nepal, the first book to come out of a printing press was probably *Sanskrit Prabeshini* by Pundit Naradev and Moti Krishna Sharma, published in 1902; the first printed periodical, *Sudha Sagar* came out only in 1898, and the first newspaper—*Gorkhapatra*—came out only as recently as 1901 (Monday, 3 Jestha, 1958 Vikram Era). The tradition of the culture of the printed word does not have a terribly long history in the Nepalese languages.

Much earlier in this enquiry I have already mentioned the language situation in Nepal today. The Census Report shows that Nepali (it used to be called Gorkhali till 1934) is the first language of 51 per cent of Nepalese population. The earliest extant epigraphic evidence of Nepali goes back to a copper plate inscription of Punya Malla, dated AD 1337.[9] In the Kathmandu Valley, Nepali had also been in frequent use in the later Malla period, mainly as a vernacular. For, prior to the advent of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepali was more a vernacular than a key medium of intellectual pursuit. Sanskrit, Maithili and Newari were more often used, both in inscriptions and manuscripts than Nepali. It was subject to the neglect of scholars who preferred Sanskrit to all other languages used locally. Before Bhanu Bhakta Acharya (AD 1814-1868) and Moti Ram Bhatta (AD 1866-1896), Nepali was subject to a great deal of dialectal uncertainty and inflections. In the creative use of Nepali the period before Bhanu Bhakta as well as the period after him is no doubt significant, yet it was only after the establishment of the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashani Samiti in 1913 that some nascent and consistent efforts were made to make Nepali a full-fledged language. *Sharada*, the first Nepali literary monthly of any influence, came out in 1933. It was, in fact, this literary monthly which nurtured the first founding fathers of modern Nepali literature such as Devkota, Sama, Bhikchchu and Siddhicharan. Thus, although Nepal has today about 60 printing presses (40 of which are in the Valley of Kathmandu), hundreds of periodicals and

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9 Pokharel, 2022, p. 13.

newspapers, and a sizeable publication of books, it is a very recent phenomenon with an inhabited history going no further than 20 or 30 years. Though Nepali has been the court language for a couple of centuries, the flowering of Nepali, too, is an equally recent phenomenon.

In many ways, Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher J.B. Rana's rule in Nepal was an eventful one. It was he who ended slavery in Nepal—again as recently as 1925. In retrospect, his efforts to modernise Nepal—his politics apart—were not despicable. He introduced electricity in Nepal and made it accessible for public consumption in 1917. He constructed a public reservoir and supplied filtered drinking water; he introduced Nepal's first narrow-gauge railway—which still manages to work as Nepal's only railway. None of these philanthropic gestures is likely to be remembered more gratefully by every new generation of the enlightened Nepalese than the establishment of Nepal's first modern college. In 1918, Prime Minister Chandra, after inaugurating the Tri-Chandra College, is reported to have said, 'This is the beginning of *our* end.' Nepal was having her first rudimentary post-school artefact on modern lines when the whole of Western Europe was already shaking with the Bolshevik Revolution. Originally affiliated to Calcutta University, Tri-Chandra College[10] was at first only an arts college and science classes were added to it much later in the 1930s. The first graduates of this college, Mr Daman Shumsher and Principals Bhairab Bahadur Pradhan and Prasanna Man Singh Pradhan, are still with us. In many ways, the 50-year-old history of this college is the history of the academic legacy of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia. Because, prior to 1951, this was the only institution of higher education in the kingdom. Almost everyone who is today in the higher echelons of power and influence in the civil service, teaching, army, journalism, literary profession and management was educated either at Tri-Chandra College or in one of the north Indian cities like Patna, Banaras, Lucknow, Allahabad and Calcutta. Tri-Chandra College has been an undergraduate college and under the then prevailing political atmosphere the erstwhile academic community of the college—which certainly had on it a galaxy of brilliant luminaries like Sardar Narendra Mani Acharya Dixit or Professor Ram Prasad Manandhar—was nothing if not solely based on routine class-room teaching, with no extra-mural

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10 Sen (undated).

identity. In the groves of Nepalese academe, as elsewhere in Nepal, the climate was not too congenial for an independent growth of the intellect. The first man among the Nepalese academics to go to India (because prior to the mid-1950s rarely did a Nepalese go elsewhere) for research and do a PhD was Professor Narayan Bahadur Manandhar,[11] who, like the first graduates of Tri-Chandra College, is still in our midst—though retired. Talking of the cultural anthropology of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, it may be worth remembering that Nepal's first and only university was incorporated by law only as recently as 1959. By that time, India's modern universities had already celebrated their first centenary. Before the incorporation of Tribhuvan University every Nepalese aspiring for an MA or an MSc or an MCom or an MEd used to trail down to the plains of India and suffer two or more Indian summers in Banaras, Patna or Calcutta. Even today, all our young men and women doing technical courses like medicine, agriculture or engineering go mostly to India. Thus, the 'modernised' academics of Nepal have hardly any history, except of non-achievement.

As I shall, when I examine the contemporary situation, have many more details to add on the quality of educational opportunities for Nepalese at home, in India and overseas in the last two decades, here, I merely wish to confine myself to (1) the traditional system of education prevalent before 1950, and (2) the nature of the civil service before 1950. I wish to say a few words on each, because this will give us an insight into the nature of the establishment to which the present-day administrative-judicial-technical-foreign services are heir. Outside the free-floating literary profession, outside teaching, journalism and management, the HMG services absorb nearly 2033 officers of gazetted rank under regular budget and some 900 more under non-recurrent development budget. In order to understand and evaluate the situation of Nepalese intelligentsia, it is necessary not only to know the composition, attitude and value-system of this huge establishment which swallows a great assortment of Nepal's literate output, but also to assess the inheritance to which the whole set-up is an inescapable heir. Before I take this up, I shall, however, say one or two things about the traditional systems of education which has co-existed in Nepal with Western-style education. There is first the ancient tradition of

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11 Shrestha, 1960, p. 67.

Sanskrit scholarship which has maintained a ritualistic continuity with the glories of Nepal's intellectual past in a sort of academic orthodoxy, training people in grammar, philosophy, logic, literature, astrology, mathematics and mythology, mainly on the basis of the interpretation and transmission of sacred texts. This education has been a preserve of the Brahmins, and it is intensely loyal to ancient Hindu ideals. It has continued fitfully but unabated among Brahmins, both practising priests and non-practising ones. The products of this education have been passionately loyal to whatever powers there be in the realm. Perhaps the one isolated occasion when scholars in this tradition had deviated from this timeless loyalty was in 1947— during the so-called Jayatu Sanskritam movement.[12] Today, this education is generously patronised by the government through scholarships, free-studentships, etc. It is imparted by pundits of stupendous scholarship who work in Bhasa Pathshalas, the Sanskrit Colleges and the University Department of Acharya. Here, education is in the authentic and great authoritarian tradition of Guru Kula, where whatever the teacher teaches is to be taken for granted as knowledge par excellence. The relevance of this tradition to our enquiry is that it has produced one of the most articulate sections of Nepal's intelligentsia. Their contribution, especially in the fields of language, religion, history, culture and Nepalese antiquity, has been substantial. They have laid far too many solid bricks on the theoretical foundations of Panchayat ideology, mainly as unacknowledged court-ideologues publicising the Hindu basis of Nepalese culture, the role of the Crown in Nepalese life, or exhorting the materialistic Nepalese youth on ancient Vedic ideals of plain living and high thinking. This system of education, this outlook on life has, for centuries, laid the foundation for an island of indigenous intellectual culture, unaffected by all waves of change in the Nepalese mind.

I do not, however, know what ratio of people in the pre-1950 or post-1950 administrative or other establishments were products of Sanskrit education. But there certainly was an overwhelming number of Kazis, Sardars, Mir Subbas, Khardars, Ditthas, Mukhiyas, Naib Ditthas, Bahidars, writers, Naibwriters, that is to say, the Bhardars and the Rakamis in the pre-1950 stratification of the Civil Service who were

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12 Sharma, 2026, p. 410.

mostly products of Shrestha Pathshalas.[13] The best I can do in this connection is quote an expert on Nepal's Public Administration.

> One must get through this (the civil service examination called *Nijamati Pass*) examination to apply for a job in the Government during the Rana regime, free competition was not known. It was not important whether a person was qualified for the job or not. The ability to please the people in key positions in the government counted as the qualification for appointment in the Government Service...The person who has a Civil Administration Education, which is only secondary level, can get an appointment and rise to the post of Kazi, the highest post in administration open to the non-ruling population of the country.[14]

Among the elite or the pre-1950 Nepal Civil Service there were, apart from the intensely clerical-minded and loyal people filtered through the *Nijamati Pass*, a liberal sprinkling of Matriculates, BAs and a few MAs in the top echelons. This weltering establishment, together with such limbs of power and moral authority as the Raj Guru, was an inseparable part of the mincing machine called Ranarchy.[15] It was nothing if not hostile to every spark of creative urge and independent intellect—let alone the emergence and autonomous growth of intelligentsia as a stratum of society.

The most ineradicable single blot on the cultural history of Nepal is, therefore, the dark night of the Nepalese soul—a century of family rule when the common man was denied even civic rights. What is interesting to note is not that every organised civic effort, whether cultural, educational or literary, was nipped in the bud, but that with the first signs of social awakening the anachronistic priesthood felt its position more shaky than did the ruling Prime Minister himself. The earliest instance of such a confrontation between tradition and non-conformism was almost an archetypal situation. Under the influence of the Arya Samajist Swami Dayananda, young Madhav Raj Joshi (the late Shukra Raj Shastri's father) came to Kathmandu in 1896 to establish an office of the Arya Samaj. Although the orthodox Brahmins of Kathmandu feebly

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13 Shrestha, 1965, pp. 1-8.
14 Pradhan, 1970, pp. 9-16.
15 Regmi, 1958a; and 1958b, particularly the chapter 'Nepal in Retrospect'.

protested against Mahav Raj's foolhardiness, because of the indifference of the then-Prime Minister Bir Shumsher J.B. Rana, nothing serious happened to Madhav Raj. But, a little later, in the high noon or the midnight of Ranarchy, in 1905, Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher J.B. Rana organised a colloquium between Madhav Raj and the Brahmin Pundits of his court, including, of course, Raj Guru Prayag Raj.[16] In logic and ratiocinate power, young Madhav Raj proved better than the hoary pundits. For some time even the Prime Minister was overwhelmed. He started praising the young man. But, in no time, the Raj Guru persuaded the Prime Minister, elaborating upon the allegation that Madhav Raj believed that Lord Pashupati was merely a stone image and that if Madhav Raj's Arya Samajist cult became popular, the common man would run amok with individualism and insist upon political freedom. Immediately, poor Madhav Raj was whipped in front of his opponents; he was then taken on a humiliating round of the city and imprisoned for two years. One of his two supporters—a Buddhist by faith—was compelled to pay the penance of a daily visit to Lord Pashupati! Almost three decades later, the situation had not changed for the better. To give another classic example, in 1937, Madhav Raj's son Shukra Raj Shastri (who, together with some other colleagues like Ganga Lal and Kedar Man Vyathit had formed a clandestine organisation called Nepal Nagarik Adhikar Samiti—Nepal Civil Liberty Association) was lecturing at Kathmandu on Karma Yoga in the *Gita*. He was arrested on the charge that he preached the precepts of the holy *Gita* without being a Brahmin. I do not wish to go into the details of the history of social, cultural and political awakening in the twentieth century Nepal. Not that it is very long, but that there is not much point in exhuming all the dead; a few should suffice. The monolithic Rana Establishment—with its major supporting limbs like the Army, the priesthood and the Civil Service, created a belated glacial age in the intellectual history of Nepal. Till 1950, there was no perceptible thaw in Nepalese society, in spite of a sporadic episode or two. The non-conformist young men who were major actors in these sad, stormy and tragic episodes were mostly educated either in Kathmandu (Durbar School-Tri-Chandra College), or in the cities of north India. There were also the Nepalese infantrymen who fought in the World Wars and saw that they, too, could achieve

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16 Sharma, pp. 399-400, 404.

something under congenial circumstances. At a later stage of the political eruption, young Nepalese who had participated in the Indian movement or had come in contact with and under the sphere of influence of the great leaders of India came to assume the leadership of the mass upheaval. When the disgruntled Ranas—too long deprived from the roll of power—too joined in, it was high time that the anachronistic regime collapsed.

The above account is, of course, about the past which is oppressively present as a backdrop of the history just behind the post-1950 decades. It is an account at once revealing and relevant to understand the contemporary intellectual situation and the claims—at times absurd and megalomaniac—of Nepalese intelligentsia. The commonplaces of our geography, ecology, history, culture, evolution of power and the inhibited growth of other institutions like modem education and streamlined public administration are the burden of the past—a truly burdensome inheritance to which the Nepalese intelligentsia today are an inescapable heir. I began with the commonplaces, because they make a safe beginning. The story above is sad, because it shows, among other things, that the Nepalese intelligentsia are not only an inhibited phenomenon—whose growth is as late and fresh as the growth of an overnight fungus. They are also a displaced stratum of society because by their training and education (as against their upbringing and origins) they have suddenly been compelled to live in the latter half of the twentieth century without due ceremony. They woke up one fine morning from the sleep of the Middle Ages and found themselves exposed to the neon lights of an electronic age.

The post-1950 decade in Nepal is characterised in the first place by a sense of release and emancipation of the intellect from a century-old political and priestly yoke, and in the second place by an unprecedented expansion of intellectual and cultural opportunities. The decade can aptly be called a decade of extroversion. For, it was a decade of explosion of all manner of ideas, activities and organised efforts. It was a decade when the pre-existing narrow stratum of the intelligentsia was frantically active and vocal—socially, culturally and, most important of all, politically. It thoroughly exposed the social attitude and the political immaturity of the Nepalese intelligentsia, and the fluctuation—till the end of the decade—seemed to be more and more to the left. By and large, they were critical of the existing order, institutions, traditions and value

systems. In fact, the up-and-coming among them professed Marxism, Progressivism,[17] Humanism or Liberal Democratic ideals in broad daylight. In these multifarious activities they brandished their particular shade of ideology with very little inhibition. Numerous social, literary and cultural organisations like the Students Unions and Federations, the Youth Organisations, the Peace Committee, Study Circles, Debating Societies, Literary Associations, Art Societies, Journalists Unions, Writers Unions, Cultural Associations, etc, came rapidly into being one after the other (or one *against* the other). Everyone tacitly assumed that they should show some or other political leaning before they had any right to survive. Apart from this broad spectrum of nebulous activities, in the ranks of the newly formed political parties there were several talented people working in multiple capacities. On 19 February, 1951, Nepal's first publicly owned Nepali language daily, *Awaj,* came out. It was followed by a spate of dailies, weeklies, monthlies and other party periodicals and literature in Nepali, Hindi, Newari and English. As a matter of course, many of these were victimised by infant mortality, which took a toll on so many of Nepal's grey little magazines after a brief and pallid existence. By the end of the decade, at least in a city or two in the kingdom, the intelligentsia had made their presence felt in the community.

The picture will, however, remain incomplete if no mention is made of an equally rapid swelling of the rank and file of the Nepalese intelligentsia. Prior to 1950, Nepal had only one college, six high schools, and about 200 primary schools. These were the only perennial sources—other than the indigenous centres of learning like *Shresta Pathshalas* or *Bhasa Pathshalas*—of recruits to the class of intelligentsia. But, with the opening of the decade, schools and colleges began to multiply almost at a geometric rate, so that by the end of the decade, there was already a sizeable literate population in Nepal. Although not all of them were members of the intelligentsia, they certainly formed a broad base and reliable audience for potential intellectuals. For, one great pre-requisite for the emergence of intellectuals as a class is the broad base of a literate audience—a sort of consuming intelligentsia, as it were. In the meantime, the aspiring Nepalese continued to go to India for higher education and

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17 Govinda Prasad Lohani, Krishna Chandra Singha Pradhan and others in *Pragati*.

technical courses because pre-1959, Nepal did not have a university of her own. Every year, Nepalese scholars left the country in sizeable numbers to do post-graduate work in India, Britain and the United States, under the Colombo Plan Scholarships, the British Council Scholarships and the Oregon University Contract Program. In the latter part of the post-1950 decade, most of the Nepalese scholars went to India under government grants or on Colombo Plan Scholarships, and most of them did a Master's programme. Only an exceptional few went to India to do research in the early fifties, and the first one in this generation was, I believe, Y.P. Pant (PhD, Banaras, 1952). In the 1950s the number of the Nepalese who went overseas—as compared with those who went to India—was microscopic. The first few to go and get a research degree from Britain were Dr Dhruva Man Amatya, Dr and Mrs Balaram Joshi, Mr Trilokya Man Shrestha and Mr Upendra Man Malla (I understand that the first person to go to Britain under the British Council Scholarship was Professor Yadu Nath Khanal, 1952).[18] Similarly, the first batch of six (?) to go to the USA under the Oregon University Contract Program left Nepal in 1955. Most of them worked for an MA or MEd or MS. The next batch of Oregon University alumni in Nepal—this time with a research degree—returned home as recently as 1962, when Messers Trailokya Nath Upraity, Panna Lall Pradhan, Krishna Prasad Sharma, Shankar Prasad Pradhan, and Dibya Deo Bhatt got a PhD in their respective fields of learning.[19] In giving the foregoing details I am *not* assuming that it is necessary to have high academic qualifications in order to become an intellectual, or that everyone who has high academic qualification is necessarily an intellectual. What I certainly am assuming is that in sketching a sociological account of the Nepalese intelligentsia, these are relevant data. For example, these nascent beginnings made in the fifties show that not only higher education and training in modern academic milieus but also academic pursuits on modern lines of research and scholarship are very recent phenomena in Nepal with hardly any precedence in our history. Undoubtedly, the number of people who have gone abroad for study, training and research either in the Indian subcontinent or overseas (this now includes some 40 countries) has gone up. Between 1961 and 1968, some 2,519 had been 'abroad'. In 1970 alone,

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18 In a private conversation, Professor Y.N. Khanal supplied me with this detail.
19 Checked personally by the author with one of the group.

53 scholars were decorated with the Mahendra Vidya Bhushan.[20] Today, Nepal has a university of her own with a decade-long history of teaching, and network of 40 affiliated colleges spread all over the kingdom. Nevertheless, the history of Nepal's modernised academics is a history of less than a decade. More than anything else, it is a history of a simple numerical explosion of the school-college-university going population. By 1968, there were 11,802 young men and women[21] in the colleges and the university of Nepal. By 1968, these institutions had a total faculty strength of 720 persons. Notwithstanding these impressive figures, the 1961 Census Report tells us that out of every hundred Nepalese, 92 can neither read nor write. Nepal spends only 6.5 per cent of her total annual budget on education,[22] on which another country like Thailand spends 20 per cent of hers. Materially and intellectually, there is no 'climate' in the university or elsewhere in its 40 tributary centres of higher learning. Here, teaching is mainly a means of livelihood rather than a way of life. In the shady groves of these academes very little work of intellectual consequence goes on outside the regular traffic of classroom teaching—except for an unfailing manufacture of unemployable graduates.

In the growth of the institutional complex which helped the recent numerical flowering of Nepalese intelligentsia, it is not just the growth of the educational institutions which deserves mention. Nepal's literary and journalistic elite, her administrators, lawyers, diplomats, artists, unaffiliated scholars, archaeologists, historians also saw a slow and steady growth in their numbers and their institutional affiliations. For instance, in the post-1950 decades, journalism has flowered considerably in quantity. Though the quality of Nepal's periodical literature may not be comparatively speaking too high, or the remuneration for regular and freelance writers not very steady, there are at least a large number of publications in three or four languages, which the literary and journalistic intelligentsia shares both as producers and consumers. In 1957 (Vikram Era 9 Ashad, 2014) the Royal Nepal Academy was incorporated by law, and it has since patronised and employed some poets and writers and sponsored their works. The Gorkhapatra Corporation and the Rastriya Sambad Samiti, among other corporations,

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20 *Gorkhapatra*, 19 February, 1970.
21 Ministry of Education, 1969.
22 *Ibid*.

employs some bright young men. Then there is the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting, and the Panchayat Philosophy Committee, which patronise large-scale literature on the Panchayat System, which. I understand, is a lucrative application. In Nepal, publishing—except for school textbooks—is almost non-existent. A few daring publishers like Sajha Publishers, the Madan Puraskar Guthi and others like Voice of Nepal are encouraging writers and poets, scholars and historians to get their works published without any financial involvement. Besides, there are a large number of public organisations devoted to literature, such as Nepali Association of Fine Arts, or small circles of scholars devoted to research in Nepalese history, culture and antiquity, such as Itihas Samsodhan Mandala, or devoted to research in economic and social life of Nepal, such as the Forum for Social Studies and Council of Applied Economic Research. Apart from these, there are financially secure centres of research activity like the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, or resourceful but unexplored avenues like the Nepal Radio, which has hitherto been merely a source of entertainment and publicity.

However, none of these institutions absorb as many highly gifted and educated Nepalese as His Majesty's Administrative or other services and subsidiary establishments do. Some of these services were organised and streamlined only as recently as 1962. At the invitation of His Majesty's Government, the UN Indo-Regional Adviser in Public Administration, Mr Edward McCrensky, was in Nepal from 4-18 November, 1968 to prepare the *Proposal for Unified Civil Service for His Majesty's Government of Nepal.*[23] Mr McCrensky was supplied with the following data on Nepal's Public Administration by the Administrative Management Department, HMG:

Total Civil Servants in Nepal	25,315
Total Gazetted Officers	2,033
Total Gazetted Officers in the non-Technical Services	1,101
Total Gazetted Officers in the Technical Services	932

The dimensions of the HMG establishment are likely to bulge, not thin down in the future. Here, in the ranks of 25,315 or 2,033 men are some of

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23 McCrensky, 1968, pp. 47-55.

Nepal's most brilliant men belonging to two or three different generations—all enmeshed in the daily round of the Singha Durbar bureaucracy and routine details of advice and administration. It was, I think, in 1955-56 that the first few academics like Professor Yadu Nath Khanal and Dr Y.P. Pant migrated from the groves of academe to the corridors of power. Since then, every year, more and more highly educated and gifted young men are attracted by the magnetism of power into its field of operation. Some, like Dr Dhruva Man Amatya, have returned like the prodigal son; others, like Mr Pashupati Shumsher, have been ejected as antibodies in the arteries of power. Yet, many, like Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, have found Singha Durbar congenial for a full flowering of their talents. Just as in the fifties the Khanals and Pants entered the maze with few qualms, similarly, in the sixties Dr B.P. Shrestha, Dr Harka B. Gurung *et al* have been lured into the edifice of planning as neo-Brahmins, while other brilliant young men, like Dr M. Mohsin and later Dr Jagadish P. Sharma, are instituted as court ideologues of the System. Besides, there is a host of highly polished diplomats, like Mr Kula Shekhar Sharma, Mr Bala Chandra Sharma, studious and efficient secretaries like Mr K.B. Malla, Professor Y.N. Khanal, Mr R.C. Malhotra, outstanding forensic brains like Attorney General Mr Shambhu Prasad Gyawali, or seasoned scholars like Mr Keshar Bahadur K.C. in the Establishment—all of whom show a great preoccupation with the culture of the printed word and things of the mind. Yet, by and large, in relation to the rest of society (as against the state), the huge institution of public administration in Nepal is nearly inarticulate. The decision-makers in Nepal may be creative—they may generate ideas, and once they are generated, the decision-makers may translate them into reality. Yet, institutionally a civil servant *qua* civil servant is *less* intellectually independent than a non-civil servant as a citizen. When he has to choose between the security of tenure and an articulate conscience, a civil servant is likely to find his conscience an expensive thing, and, presumably, many would prefer not to have it at all. What comes conveniently in between is the civil service code.[24]

This brings me close to the 1960s. The most primary prerequisite for the emergence of a truly independent intellectual class is not just the growth of cities with university, college, libraries, journals, theatres,

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24 Merton, 1965, pp. 207-224, and p. 212 footnotes.

cinemas, radios, etc, but also a sufficient degree of *economic independence*, so that intellectuals can live up to their ideals and convictions without fearing social and economic persecution.[25] In Nepal, except for a few self-supporting intellectuals like Mr Mahesh Chandra Regmi or erstwhile politicians like Dr D.R. Regmi or 'affluent aristocrats' like Mr Soorya Prasad Upadhyaya or Mr Rishikesh Shaha, nearly every one of the established names in creative and influential fields are in the full-time service of the establishment. Almost all creative and influential intellectuals in Nepal are economically dependent in one way or the other on the Government. One plain but primary reason for the poverty of the intellect in Nepal is the poverty of the intellectual. The intellectual as well as the non-intellectual has to scrape a living. The intellectual may not live by bread alone, but he has to live, like others, supporting a family with a host of dependants and economic liabilities. In Nepal, because of an inhibited growth of other institutional complex (like industry, for instance), in eight out of every ten instances, the intellectual scrapes his living by serving in governmental or semi-governmental establishments. The Government and its established networks are the only *jajmans* of intellectuals in Nepal. This economic bondage of the intellectuals makes their convictions an expensive luxury. This normally settles their attitude towards society in general and the Establishment in particular. Thus, the most conspicuous single feature of intellectual life in Nepal in the 1960s is its neutralisation, its introversion and identification with an in-built nationalist ideology and aggressively pro-Establishment; in the sixties, it became respectable to be plainly uncritical of the Establishment. In fact, even some erstwhile Marxist pundits and left-wing intellectuals had made public recantation of their leanings and professed their faith in the official line. After 1960, not only did the writings of an articulate section of the Nepalese intelligentsia become visibly uncritical of the Government, but also a large number of them were recruited to popularise the System as popular exponents of its economic, political, social, cultural and spiritual aspects. The old Ministry of National Guidance, the Ministry of Home and Panchayat Affairs, the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting, the Panchayat Philosophy Committee, not to mention a number of Government-aided active Panchayat Study Forums, have in the past

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25 Bergel, 1962.

decade or so sponsored a sizeable quantity of indigenous literature on the system. The rise of the Panchayat ideology has given, in a sense, unsought-for opportunities to writers who have a gift of phrasing.[26] In all likelihood, some of them would have, under a different political set-up, written equally good books on the ruling ideology. Though a few, like *A Planned Democracy*, are cogent and persuasive, much of this literature is totally inaccessible to the common man. As far as *he* is concerned the only proof of the pudding is in eating it, and 92 out of every hundred Nepalese cannot eat any verbal pudding at all. The ideological ramifications apart, for them the Kingdom of Heaven shall not be brought on the Nepalese soil by verbal magic alone.

It is here that in Nepal one sees a situation almost parallel to what Julian Benda in France had called *trahison de clercs* (i.e. the betrayal of the intellectuals).[27] Here, I see the need to be explicit about the basic role and function of intellectuals in a traditional society like ours. We may begin by distinguishing between the term 'intelligentsia' and the term 'intellectual'. 'Intelligentsia' was a term first used in Czarist Russia in the nineteenth century to refer to 'those who have received a university education which qualified them for professional occupation. Subsequently, its connotation had been extended by many writers to include the disgruntled educated class in professions or outside them, but who have enlightened ideas and are critical of the social order.' The class in Russia was represented by such giants as Belinsky and Herzen. 'The intellectuals, on the other hand, are generally regarded as comprising the much smaller group of those who contribute to the creation, transmission and criticism of ideas; they include writers, artists, scientists, philosophers, religious thinkers, social theorists, political commentators.'[28] A direct concern with the non-material culture of a society is their distinguishing feature.

In Europe, the origins of the modern intellectuals have generally been placed in mediaeval universities. The intellectuals established themselves as critics of society by their opposition to the ruling class and to the Church of the *ancien regime*. It is in this role, as critics of

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26 One or two members of the Panchayat Philosophy Committee have a facile command over their language. See, for instance, the writings of Mr Poorna Bahadur 'Manav'—a deposed member of the Committee.

27 Benda, 1955.

28 Bottomere, 1967, pp. 69-111.

society, that the modern intellectuals in the West have won their place. Thus, the primary function of the intellectual class is to serve as a kind of permanent opposition in society by its radical criticism of actual institutions, values, behaviour and attitudes, including outworn traditions. The intellectuals, unlike the rest of their society, are qualified to withdraw themselves and meditate and evaluate the actual in terms of the ideal. The role of the intellectuals is primarily to evaluate the realities of their society. In Nepal, this is where because of the economic poverty and bondage of the intellectuals, they seem to have failed their society and betrayed their 'class obligations' if they feel they have any. An intellectual is not just a latter-day variation on the ancient Brahmin priest: his function in society is not ritualistic. Though a great many of his species do occupy high posts as experts, technicians, planners, advisers, ideologues and functionaries in the service of the Establishment, modern intellectuals, unlike the proverbial philosophers who have merely *interpreted* the world in several ways, must help society to *change*, not to stagnate. What we have in Nepal, however, is not an articulate class of intellectuals who are willing to fill in the critical-evaluative role; what we have is only a class of a white-collared proletariat who work, not for wages, but for salaries of different scales.

The basis of all intellectual culture is honesty or the integrity of effort. The tenor of Nepalese civic life, however, is such that it is extremely unlikely to promote either of these ethical bases of all intellectual culture. For instance, reading some asserted species of the literature on the Panchayat System makes one believe that for the vocal few preoccupied with writing on the System, it is not so much a matter of intellectual commitment as of convenience. No wonder that for them the only way 'to strengthen the System' (or other indigenous values and institutions) is *just* to go on praising them verbally although nobody really knows who consumes the end product, or for whom the literature of eulogy is produced. One could just as well say that they are 'committed' to the weather. The social observers (who have no axe to grind) wonder if in the future the ability to churn out such literature, irrespective of their quality, is to be the only qualifying test of a man's intellectual abilities or of his worth and usefulness to the System. In the long run, incompetent publicity may do greater harm to our institutions than inadequate publicity. Compared with some esoteric ideological expositions, not to speak of the literature of eulogy, an empirical field-study on the actual

working of some town panchayats, or a pilot survey of the day-to-day operations of some village panchayats or class organisations, is likely to be more effective for *evaluating* the System, and, if only the decision-makers are willing to face the findings, orient the System on this basis.

In the post-industrial societies in the West, intellectuals are recruited increasingly from several different social strata. This is, perhaps, why they are said to be *freischwebende intelligenz*,[29] to be socially 'unattached' or 'free-floating'—free in the sense that they are not guided by any class or caste prejudices; free in the sense that they are guided, not by sentimental slogans of demagoguery, but by clear reasoning. Sociologists like Gaetano Mosca and Karl Mannheim pin their faith on the intellectuals as the bridging force between the class divisions. The main prerogatives of the intellectual class are said to be (1) objectivity of outlook, and (2) freedom from allegiance, except to reason and truth, except to the intellect. In the foreseeable future, intellectuals in Nepal are, however, quite unlikely to fulfil this second role. In Nepal, intellectuals as well as the broad stratum of the intelligentsia, have come almost entirely from the upper castes—the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and upper-caste Newars. They constitute more than 80 per cent of Nepal's intellectual and power elite,[30] and in a profession like teaching there are more than 40 per cent Brahmins and Kshatriyas, and some 33 per cent upper-caste Newars. In a society where however modern the culture of most intellectuals may be, most of them live their daily lives in 'a vital domestic culture of kinship, tribe and religious outlook,' it is impossible to view them as 'a class above all classes, a caste above all castes, a community above all communities'—without prejudices. To overcome the culture of kinship, a few try and possibly none succeed completely. In many cases, the prejudices and allegiance are merely rationalised under the cloak of nationalistic and similar other jargon.[31] Thus, in the second role expected of intellectuals the Nepalese breed are extremely unlikely to fit in; the backdrop of their history and their social allegiance are both against it.

Finally, by definition, the intellectuals should be *primarily* (but not

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29 Mannheim, 1963.

30 Rana, 1969, 7-14.

31 Take, for instance, the attitude of Nepal's respectable intellectuals towards the minority languages and cultures of Nepal—which seems to me to be a test case, a sort of litmus paper.

exclusively) pre-occupied with the culture of ideas, ideals, and with the creations and things of the mind. By this, I do not mean that they should be other-worldly, impractical or anti-empirical in their pursuits. Perhaps a host of modern intellectuals betray in their worldly make-up a streak of the mediaeval monk, but a typical modern intellectual is not a latter-day variation of the world-renouncing fakir. The intellectual is very much of this world, but unlike others he lives by some ideals and convictions. His idealism, intellectuality and integrity of efforts characterise him as much as his attainment in terms of his influence and prestige in society. In Nepal, however, the literate section of the population shows not only a great dearth of idealism or a universal paucity of effort, application and dedication, but also an endemic infection with the virus of plain materialistic success. Success— measurable material success, success by hook or by crook—is the law, and for the poverty-stricken Nepalese 'making money' is the only visible end for which life seems to be worth living. To him the eternal choice is between 'making oneself' and 'remaking society' and making oneself is invariably synonymous in Nepal with making money. Even those who are still suffering from a hangover of 'obsolete' idealism find themselves already trapped between their idealistic values and aspirations *and* the realities of the society to which they must accommodate themselves. Hemmed in on all sides by the *nouveau riche* of a developing society the Nepalese intelligentsia is becoming increasingly materialistic in its value-system, and like mercenaries who fight for money, they measure success—just as other members of their society do—in terms of cash income reinforced concrete edifices, cars, foreign liquor, pieces of furniture, advantageous marriages, overseas travels and so on. Besides, in Nepal, the literate folks as well as the illiterate ones pin greater faith on connections, influence and the ability to please than on personal striving, integrity and achievement. They are not to blame, particularly when the latter never count in Nepal before the former—such is the reward-system in Nepal. They are not to blame if in our acquisitive society, dreaming of easy success, of what that great American, Dale Carnegie, calls 'the short-cut to distinction'—Ambassadorship, Ministership, Secretaryship—for such are the ultimate aspirations of our elite, they prefer applying themselves to please the powers than to applying themselves to the long pursuits of a non-material culture where success is always a matter of achievement. (In post-industrial societies, the status of

an intellectual is always an achieved one.) The prospects of easy money and overseas travels are not always in this line. While this is the social milieu of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, paradoxically enough, Nepal is one of the few countries in Asia where literate members of the population are greatly flattered when someone calls them 'intellectual'. They see their own shadows almost invariably larger than life-size. Compared with their attainments, qualitative or quantitative, the claims of the literate Nepalese to intellectuality sound megalomaniac. Contemporary Nepalese intellectual culture is a little too meagre, in fact, so meagre that even the few genuine scholars have no special reasons to be self-congratulatory. Take, for instance, any field of intellectual application. How many readable books and papers have been written by Nepalese in the last twenty years on, say, the economic problems of Nepal? Half a dozen by Dr Y.P. Pant, a few by Dr B.P. Shrestha and a few more by the textbook economists. Compared with international standards of academic scholarship one would not know where our textbook economists stand or what degree of originality there is in their approach. How many books and learned papers are there on such vital, fertile and unexplored fields of Nepalese life as art, architecture, religion, culture, history, sociology, anthropology, geography, political evolution, languages and literatures? Where there are a few, as on history by such established names as Dr D.R. Regmi, they are more a monument to personal perseverance than to the originality of approach or an abiding scholarly passion for minutiae, for accuracy of language and exactitude of details. Even on our own history and culture what do we have other than fugitive writings of the late Historian-Laureate Kharidar Baburam Acharya, the publications of Itihas Samsodhan Mandala, the books of Surya Bikram Gewali, Balachandra Sharma and Yogi Narahari Nath? By and large, the output of *Gorkhapatra* or *The Rising Nepal*. Our scholarly tradition has not outgrown the *Vasudha-Nepal Review* or the *Ruprekha-Madhuparka* stage, and it is these grey little magazines, these cheerless periodicals and dailies which nurture our minds. A serious and unsparing self-examination should have left no room for the curious sense of self-importance which nine out of every ten intellectuals in Nepal unfailingly betray.

This almost suffocating milieu is vitiated by a great deal of inbreeding among the Nepalese intelligentsia. For as far as the general culture of the Nepalese intelligentsia is concerned, on either extreme end of the spectrum there are two parallel and mutually inaccessible cultures: (1)

the traditional Sanskritised, Hinduistic, spiritualistic, didactic, aggressively nostalgic and nationalistic intellectual culture of the pundits, and (2) the Westernised, a modern jargon-ridden, empirical critical, at times sophisticated, extrovert intellectual culture of the neo-Brahmins, the modernised experts, advisers, technicians, economists, writers, commentators, journalists and academics. In one case, it is Sanskrit which is the cultural feeder; in the other, it is the English language—paradoxically neither of which is a language spoken by Nepalese as their first language. The Hindu pundits, though insistent upon the revival of Sanskrit, condescend to use heavily Sanskritised Nepali. The 'modernised' elite use English, and they use it as competently as they would have done Nepali. Their use of English, though far from being impeccable, is an open and inviting field for socio-linguistic enquiry—deserving a separate study. Since the culture of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, except in the case of artists, painters and sculptors, who are not terribly numerous, is predominantly the culture of the printed word, I shall just mention a few things as to the possibilities and limitations of both Sanskritised and modernised language-cultures. As far as creative work and intellectual discourse are concerned, there are three[32] languages in use in Nepal: (1) Nepali, (2) Newari, and (3) English. Of the three, Newari is limited almost entirely to 'creative' writing among the Newars, and because of inbreeding and state negligence it is, though culturally a rich and significant language, not likely to be very important for the non-Newari-speaking population of Nepal. And the Newars themselves as a people are almost finished. The position of Nepali is different, first, because it is the national language and, secondly, because it is a language spoken by more than half of Nepal's total population. Politically, the future of Nepali is nothing if not bright. Its journalistic and creative possibilities[33] are immense. Creative writers, journalists, teachers, textbook writers and historians are increasingly using Nepali for their work. However, the 49 per cent of the non-Nepali speaking population of Nepal are likely to find its everyday use almost a necessity for survival, while its increasing Sanskritisation—by creating an emotional barrier—is likely

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32 Acharya, 2026.

33 See Uttam Kunwar's *Writer and Literature* (in Nepali) and also *Ruparekha* (a Nepali monthly).

to put them in a socially disadvantageous status. As a medium of scientific, technical and modern intellectual discourse, there are almost insurmountable limitations in the intrinsic potentialities of Nepali, because the paradox about Nepali is that the more staunchly nationalistic we become about its use in higher discourse, the less it sounds like the Nepali language. This may be one of the several reasons why the English language has been used even by those intellectuals whose first language is Nepali. In fact, more Nepali-speaking writers have used English than writers speaking other minority languages. The sociological reasons for the use of English may be too many, and I do not wish to go into them in this enquiry. Although all Nepalese writers using English are fitfully aware of the fact that no one speaks English in Nepal as his mother tongue, that their readership is extremely limited, or that their own English is not impeccable, they continue to find it a convenient medium of written discourse—in the case of non-Nepali speakers, perhaps a little more convenient than Nepali. Some of them are genuinely handicapped, either by their educational history, or by their ethnic origins, but others use English simply because of its prestige value. In any case, the use of readable English—as against the use of English—is likely to remain a minority phenomenon in Nepal. The producers and the consumers of English writing in Nepal are nearly the same people.

Whatever be the social origins, the antecedents, the culture, education and profession of contemporary Nepalese intelligentsia, they are likely to remain a shadowy and insubstantial phenomenon—merely a band of economically castrated and socially limping angels beating the drums of their respective fads. In the recent past even the few stray intellectuals with us have tended to be less radical critics of their society than earlier. They have tended to be more concerned with solving the kind of short-term, specific problems which arise out of their complete identification with the Establishment. Of the rest, who are not-too-understandably impatient to be admitted into the pantheon, most lack character and distinction, integrity and effort, and their numerical presence, like the presence of monks in mediaeval monasteries, is merely ritualistic. Because of their ineffectuality and moral impotence the secular thoughts of the common run of Nepalese folk are 'concentrated mostly on wages, salaries, and profits, on idle obnoxious forms of recreation', and above all, on the deadly rat-race for connection, influence and power. The

world 'intellectual', like other status symbols like the cement-cube of a bungalow or the ownership of a car, may add an additional ring of halo around one's head, but the moral justification for its overuse may need a close collective self-examination among the class of aspirants. The last word has already been said on this subject in an editorial of Kathmandu's leading English language daily, and I see nothing more befitting to use as a conclusion to my enquiry into the poverty of intellect in Nepal, than an acknowledged quotation from the forthright editorial of *The Rising Nepal*.

> Though few can be called intellectuals, in the true sense of the word, it is no shame not be one. It is even better, and more honest, than being a pseudo-intellectual.[34]

Naturally, it will be fruitless to hunt for Russels, Sartres, Gramscis, to invent Herbert Marcuses, Noam Chomskys, or to institute Galbraiths, Marshall McLuhans: we have none, except decent and respectable cogs in the wheel of Nepalese society, persistently striving towards the beatitude of an exploitation-less state.

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34 *The Rising Nepal*, 3 February, 1970.

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12

The Occupation of the Kathmandu Valley and Its Fallout

Documented history of landownership in the Kathmandu Valley shows that in the early centuries AD, the King or the State donated land to the temples and monasteries as well as to the communities to encourage settlement and reclamation of unsettled land. The King, as the lord of the land, also granted land as a means of livelihood in kind to his clientele and retainers. Land was primarily territory or means of livelihood rather than a piece of property bought and sold like a commodity in the market. There is no record of real-estate transactions before the 12th century AD when the King himself sold land for gold. Such land had a different status—quite different from the land granted as royal favour.

In the late 17th and 18th centuries, the Khas Brahmins and Chhetris began to settle permanently on the outskirts and the rim of the Valley though they were far and few between. Some mercenaries from the hills were also enlisted in the army of the feudal city-states to fight internecine battles that so often erupted among them.

This relationship to land underwent a drastic change when a new ruling dynasty originating from the hilly principality of Gorkha conquered the Valley in 1769. With the capture of political power, not only did land relations change, vast areas of landed property were annexed by the new ruling elite to their private property on the slightest pretext of incomplete documents or similar other flimsy grounds. The political instability and court intrigues that ensued for half a century in the 1800-1850s led to confiscation of land from one elite family and grabbing it by the next. Vast areas of landed estates were confiscated and

appropriated to finance the expansionist military campaigns of the Gorkhali State and the Anglo-Gorkhali War, which ended in a humiliating treaty with the British East India Company in 1816.

Until 1769, the Malla rulers of the Valley did not allow any outsider to stay overnight within their walled cities. But with the collapse of their city-states, the Court of Gorkha moved to Kathmandu on 10 March, 1770, and with the court also moved in the new ruling elite families and their army. Until 1950, only the army, the police, labourers and coolies were the permanent non-indigenous settlers in the Kathmandu Valley. The civil servants serving the Rana rule were far and few between. Among the non-Nepalis were a few thousand Muslim traders, some Tibetans and a few first-generation or second-generation Marwari families. Except during the festivals such as Dashain or Shiva Ratri, even Nepalis coming from outside the Kathmandu Valley were not allowed in the city of Kathmandu without a kind of 'local passport' called *Rahadani*, a practice which was discontinued only after 23 December, 1956. But with the signing of the Nepal-India Friendship and Peace Treaty in July 1950, in less than four decades nearly 80 per cent of business and economic life of Nepal is now controlled by the people of Indian origin.

The new ruling families—the Shahas and the Ranas—started to build western-style palatial residences to house their fast multiplying progeny. Between 1900 and 1940, more than 50,000 ropanis[1] of prime land in Kathmandu-Patan cities, stretching from Sital Niwas to Jawalakhel, were annexed and appropriated for the personal use of the rulers by paying nominal compensation. Some of these lands belonged to monasteries and religious trusts of the indigenous Buddhist populations of Kathmandu and Patan. During the same period, a number of so-called public institutions and complexes were built, such as hospitals, schools, colleges, parade grounds, military barracks, etc—all of which were originally the lands belonging to the indigenous populations—mostly lower castes such as farmers, carpenters, small traders and artisans who were politically mute and dumb at that time of absolute Rana rule.

During the 1960s, the policy of the late King Mahendra, who was then an absolute ruler, was to encourage 'national integration'. For all intents and purposes, this policy meant to convert the indigenous populations into a minority and politically castrate and marginalise them by cutting

1 A ropani is 74x74 feet.

at the foundations of their economic and cultural life. The King encouraged the settlement of non-indigenous Brahmins and Chhetris in the Kathmandu Valley so as to convert the local Newars into an ineffective political minority.

Most fertile lands in the Kathmandu Valley were also converted into so-called 'industrial districts', project installations, brick factories, shoe factories, corporation offices, exhibition grounds, and office blocks of one sort or other by annexing private as well as institutional lands at nominal prices. The net result of all these organised activities of the State was to dispossess and displace the indigenous owners of land in the Kathmandu Valley and destroy their religious and cultural base. For example, when 360 acres of the most fertile and prime land at the foothills of the mediaeval town of Kirtipur were appropriated to locate Tribhuvan University, not only the life-style but also the life-line of the Kirtipur villagers was cut. No wonder that for a long time there was direct confrontation between the State and the villagers who would not give in so easily before the State showed its ugly fangs. Similar incidents punctuated the 1960s and 1970s, when the dispossession of the indigenous populations and appropriation of their land for 'public enterprises' went on at a ferocious speed.

The major turning point, the beginning of the end, as it were, came for the indigenous populations when an apparently progressive Land Reform Act, was promulgated by King Mahendra in 1964, instituting a ceiling of 25 ropanis on the size of private land and ensuring the tenancy rights of the tiller, creating a sort of dual-ownership not only on private land but also on institutional, religious and cultural holdings. This proved to be the ultimate blow to the indigenous populations as a whole. Initially, the tenants were apparent beneficiaries of this reform. However, in the long run, they were the greatest losers. Because of the establishment of their legal right to a share of the property, it led to the fragmentation and, ultimately, alienation, dispossession and transfer of land rights to the non-indigenous populations who were already flocking the enchanting and temperate valley from all over the Kingdom in search of social, economic, and, above all, political opportunities. By now, a majority of 'people's representatives' from the Mechi to the Mahakali have permanently settled in posh areas of the Kathmandu Valley. In 1968, of the total 76,405 hectares of land in the Valley, 460,700 (61.12 per cent) was still cultivated green rice fields. In 1994, the cultivated land is less

than 52 per cent and the non-agricultural land has increased from 5.6 per cent in 1984 to 14.5 per cent in 1994, thanks to many development activities, including the disastrous Ring Road, and the state-sponsored Property Development Plans in the suburbia like Tahachal, Dallu, Kuleswar, Golphutar, Sainbu, Gongobu and Balkhu areas—all of which have enriched unscrupulous speculators and impoverished the environment of Kathmandu. In 1981, the average density of population per one square kilometre in the Kathmandu Valley was 963; in 1991 it is 1277. Compare this with the national average of 102 in 1981 and 126 in 1991.

The undeclared settlement policy of the Government also led to a temporary boom of the real estate business and the thriving business of speculation and investment in land. Real estate developers began to buy land at throwaway price, and after some nominal investment in passages and marginal utilities they began to sell these lands at soaring prices, particularly during the 1980s. To this category of enterprises also belong the government-sponsored settlements for civil servants who comprise mostly the non-indigenous populations of the Valley. According to the Report of the National Commission on Population, 1983:

> (In 1981) out of about 19,571 in-migrants, Brahmins and Chhetris constitute 44 per cent of in-migrants. Other Hill ethnic groups account for 26 per cent while Newars constitute another 4 per cent of the in-migrants. The magnitude of in-migrants has increased considerably within the last 10 to 15 years.[2]

The magnitude of in-migration is alarming, and the pace can be guessed from the following data. The total urban population of the Kathmandu Valley in 1981 was 363,507. In 1991, it has risen to 598,525, out of which 36,134 were foreign-born and 98,543 were in-migrants from outside the Valley. Among the in-migrants, 43.37 per cent came from the Mountains, 1724 per cent from the Hills, and 44.80 per cent from the Tarai.[3]

Once they leave their villages, the ambitious Nepali have two options: to go to *Lahur* or to go to Nepal. All roads, thus, lead to Kathmandu—or Nepal, as it is known to the people from the 4,000 odd villages of the

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2 Report of the National Commission on Population, 1983, p. 5.

3 K.C., 1998, pp.27-28.

Kingdom. People come here for education, medication, litigation and fortune-hunting, particularly political, cultural and economic opportunities the capital city offers them. A dramatic change in the ethnic structure of the population of the Kathmandu Valley has taken place in the meantime, leading to the marginalisation of the local Newars. This will be evident from the following tables:

Table 1
Gradual Marginalisation of the Indigenous Population in the Kathmandu Valley, 1952/54 to 1991

	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991
Newari-speakers (%)	74.95	52.12	46.23	45.33	43.93
Kathmandu Municipality, 1991					
Newari-speakers	53	45.5	43.2	42.3	38

Table 2
The Ethnic Composition of the Kathmandu Municipality, 1991

Newar	176,372	41.86
Brahmin	82,247	19.52
Chetri	58,466	13.88
Tamang	22,695	5.38
Gurung	16,297	3.86
Others	65.181	15.47

The rise of the tourist industry is not an unmixed blessing either. It is yet another factor responsible for the dispossession of the indigenous populations in the Valley. The growth of resorts, hotels and the tourist industry has robbed the natives of their prime land in one way or another. The deliberate government policy to locate dubious industries such as garments as well as carpets in the Valley has irreparably polluted and disfigured the cityscape, to say the least.

Because of the influx of settlers from all over the Kingdom the construction industry went on at a ferocious speed for nearly 30 years. On an average, about 7,000 new houses were built a year in Kathmandu—mostly by those who come from outside the Valley and had made political

fortunes here. Although the number has now come down to about 3,500 new houses a year, even then this is a headlong speed, sufficient in itself, not only to destroy the open space and greenery but to dispossess and throw the indigenous populations out of their own land and habitat. The immigrant camel is not only driving the indigenous Newars out of the tent: the Newars have become aliens in their own home.

The population in Nepal grows at the average rate of 2.1 to 2.5 per cent per annum. This has been the national average since the 1950s. However, the population of Kathmandu is growing at the rate of 7.5 per cent per year. This is not a natural growth rate, and certainly not due to the growth of indigenous populations already settled here in the last fifty or so years. The influx of non-indigenous populations from outside the Valley, including Tibetan refugees (estimated number 6090) and semi-skilled Indian labourers (estimated to be more than 50,000) from across the border, have destroyed the fabric of life in the city of Kathmandu, converting it into a living hell.

In a city where, until the 1950s, there used to be fewer than 125,000 people, there are now more than half a million inhabitants! The cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley, with seven monument zones in the World Heritage List, is under direct threat and their environmental homogeneity is nearly destroyed. Public utilities have nearly all collapsed, including water supply, sewerage, solid waste management and public transport. The city is now rated one of the most polluted spots on the earth—with more than 115,766 vehicles, including 650 Vikram tempos which emit pure carbon monoxide, running within a stretch of less than 10 kilometres of metalled and narrow roads. The footpaths are all occupied by shops, the river banks are fully colonised by shanties and squatters (the so-called landless). There are nearly 60 such settlements of more than 1,000 each all along the once holy rivers of the city of Kathmandu—the Bagmati, the Visnumati, the Tekhu, the Sama Kusi and the Dhobi Khola. Every inch of open public space—be it a temple terrace, a public resting place, or a monastery—is occupied by unauthorised squatters—about whom no public authority wants to do anything because—he or she might have been a precious voter brought all the way from God knows where by ambitious political leaders. One has only to quickly move around the so-called 'Hong Kong Bazaar' beneath the Singha Durbar Road or the Bagh Durbar area or the Exhibition Grounds to guess the possible health hazards and the possible disasters

(such as fire), raised by the unscrupulous official sponsorship of such mass occupation of public space in Kathmandu by immigrants from outside the Valley.

The impact of all this on the social and cultural life of the city of Kathmandu is growth in all forms of degradation in the quality of social life, from crime and prostitution to drug-pushing and delinquency among the youth. The indigenous populations of the Kathmandu Valley are, thus, paying a very dear and heavy social, cultural and economic price for alienation from their roots in land and other natural resources. They were dispossessed from these resources, primarily by the state and its various arms of power and jurisdiction, through declared or undeclared measures which are seemingly progressive and developmental.

The indigenous populations of the Kathmandu Valley themselves may have been doing serious injustice to their posterity as well as their history by selling land and houses to non-natives. They may be doing so now unwittingly by renting their shops, land and homes to non-natives on the false attraction of a soft life with the rentier culture or out of sheer material greed. More than 29 per cent of houses and shops in the Kathmandu Valley are on rent. This affluence is, unfortunately, temporary whereas the costs may have been too dear, and permanently damaging to their past as well as their economic and political future.

Undoubtedly, there is no dearth of social scientists who passionately deny that there is such a social category in Nepal called 'the indigenous population or people'. They say that everyone has come from somewhere. The only question seems to be how early or how late you have arrived here. However, lately organised groups and advocacy campaigns have come up with this fundamental issue of the relation of the indigenous populations to land. Each of us is, of course, legally a little owner of our share of the earth. Upon this plot of the earth we may have so-called 'individual property rights' to dispose of it or sell it like a commodity to anyone we like or to someone who is willing to pay the most. But, in doing so, we might be robbing ourselves collectively as well as our posterity of the right to live as our ancestors had done until not long ago. Once you are dispossessed from land you are cut off from the roots of your society and culture which feeds on land. Therefore, advocacy and political education may need to be intensified at all levels. But, what is more urgent is action both at the national and international levels, particularly in the United Nations forums. Organised political action at

home and abroad is the top-most agenda for survival of the indigenous populations, their culture and way of life. The only and ultimate way out for most of the dispossessed and displaced indigenous populations of Nepal is, of course, the right to self-rule.

The excellent and lucid draft paper, 'Indigenous People and Their Relationship to Land' by Mrs Erica-Irene Daes, dated 20 June 1997, prepared for the Forty-ninth Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, is a trail-blazing document. The document should be studied, circulated widely and debated intensely among all activists fighting for a common cause for the survival of the indigenous populations in Nepal.[4]

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4 This is a summary of a much longer paper written as a comment on Mrs Daes's paper.

13

Bāhunvāda: Myth or Reality?

After 25 years of persevering belligerence, Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the three cities of the Kathmandu Valley in 1769. One year later, on 23 March, he shifted his capital to newly occupied Kathmandu. With his court came his kinsmen, retinue, priests and soldiers—the new aristocracy of the hill region—to settle permanently in Kathmandu. They symbolised what Nepal's leading economic historian Mahesh C. Regmi calls 'a shift of political and economic power'. Among them were the *thar-ghar*, the chosen and select families of hill Brahmins such as Aryal, Khanal, Pandey and Panta who were rewarded with the best lands and houses in the Valley as their *jagir* in return for their services to the Gorkhali court in war and peace. Thus, begins the success story of the *parbate* Bahuns, the Brahmins from the hills.

The Sanskrit word *brahmana* has more than one meaning and is therefore potentially ambiguous. Without the contextual clue it might mean any of these four: supernatural power or the absolute world-spirit; a Vedic text of the brahmanic class; the god Brahma; or a member of the priestly order in the Hindu society. Relatively speaking, the native term *Bahun* is decidedly preferable for it is starkly unambiguous in its social and cultural reference. Manu, the Hindu law-giver, prescribed six main functions to a Brahmin: study and make others study, sacrifice and make others sacrifice, give and receive gifts.[1] However, Manu nearly forgot the central political or ideological function of the brahmana, that is to

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1 *Manusmriti* X: 75.

legitimise political power, no matter who holds it, for which he receives the munificence of the powers that be. It may not be instantly possible to verify if all the known clans of *parbate* Bahuns, listed for example in Shikharnatha Subedi's *Tharagotra Pravaravali*, perform all these ritual functions. Perhaps, they do not. Nor is it possible to chronologise and substantiate the claim of these clans to have migrated from the heartland of Aryavarta into the laps of the rugged hills of Nepal. Perhaps, it is even silly to expect them to observe Manu's prescriptions in the cold Himalaya at the high noon of the Kali Yuga. But a number of these clans and lineages with *gotras* and *pravaras* allegedly drawn from eponymic Vedic and Upanishadic rishis claim nothing if not pristine purity of blood and Aryan descent. However, only a few families have published their authentic genealogies, going back eight to ten generations, and fewer have bare lists of dead names. Those who migrated to the Kathmandu Valley came with their *jajaman* families such as the Chhetri families of the Thapas, Pande, Basnet and Bohara as well as Kunwars, a branch of which later staked a claim to have descended from the Ranas of Chitor. The *purohits* as well as the *jajamans* speak *khas kura* (or *Nepali* as it is known today) and are known as *khas*—*a* people originally classified by Manu as *vratya*, or 'those who have abandoned sacred rites and lost their caste'.[2]

Not only the Gorkhali army but also their civil administration did not recruit the Newars—the inhabitants of the conquered Valley because of the deeply ingrained distrust and contempt for them in the Gorkhali psyche—graphically expressed in such sayings as *Newar ista ra babu dusta kahilai hundaina* (a Newar is never a friend just as a father is never an enemy). Only after October 1804 were some Newars admitted in the revenue administration, then only because Gorkhali *sardars* could not comprehend the Valley's land administration system.

After Jung Bahadur Kunwar came to power in September 1846, following the Kot Massacre, he re-organised the judicial, civil and revenue administration along seemingly institutional models. His *Muluki Ain*, or Civil Code of 1854, tried to codify Hindu caste orthodoxy as state ideology with the Bahuns and Thakuris-Chhetris topping the social hierarchy, and lumping a large segment of other Nepalis, including Newars, as enslavable *matawalis*. Although Jung Bahadur's *Muluki Ain*, which gave

2 *Manusmrti* X: 22.

the highest *ritual status* to Bahuns, was officially abolished 110 years later, in 1963, it had by then ensured the Bahun's *secular status* as well by putting them at the top of the social pyramid. The Newars were 'upgraded' as 'un-enslavable' in 1863, when Jung Bahadur was visibly pleased with their services in the 1854/55 war with Tibet and the 1857 Lucknow operation.

Among Jang Bahadur's client families staffing the Rana administration, most came from Khas Thakuri, Chhetri and Bahun families. Of the 230 *bhardars* (council members) signing the 1854 *Ain* there were only seven Newars—three *subbas* from the family of Siddhi Man Rajbhandari, two *kharidars*, and one *dittha*, and one other. Because of their knowledge of Persian-Urdu, Tibetan and English, the Jaishi Kotha and the Munshi Khana—which dealt with all foreign affairs—were staffed by a few select Newar families. Thus, the Newars seem to have made a small dent into the early Rana administration. Their administrative skills and accomplishment must have been no small asset, enabling them to survive the conspiratorial court politics which lingered till the rise of Chandra Shumsher in 1901.

A classic instance of the Rana court ethos is narrated by Sukra Raj Shastri, the martyr hanged in 1941, in a biography of his distinguished father Madhav Raj Joshi entitled, *Sahidke Kalam Se* ('From the Martyr's Pen', posthumously published in 1958). In July 1905, in the presence of Chandra Shumsher, Madhav Raj was brutally beaten by the pandits of his court for asserting that true Hinduism is enshrined in the Vedas and the Upanishads, not in worshipping the stone image of Pashupatinath. Madhav Raj was paraded through the streets of Kathmandu with a bleeding head and a blood-stained body. In many ways, as Bhuvan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose put it, 'Madhav Raj Joshi was the first rebel in Nepal who revolted against brahmanic orthodoxy by inaugurating the social and political awakening which led to the movement for democracy in the 1940s and the overthrow of the Ranas in 1950.'

The extent and proportion of Bahun and Newar inroads into the Rana administration can be judged from the list of *bhardars* who assembled on 7 November, 1950, to depose King Tribhuvan after he sought asylum in the Indian Embassy. Among the 258 highest officials signing the document, there were 23 Newars in all—two *kazis*, four *sardars*, 16 *mir subbas* and one engineer. From the Bahun community there were 36, out of which 13 were from the families of the *badaguruju*, *rajaguruju* and

gurupurohit and four pandits, nine *mir subbos*, five *sardars*, four professors and one doctor.[3]

With the exception of Bahuns, Newars were the earliest to realise the importance of modern education and training for the professions. They were among the first to make use of education, as soon as the Durbar School was made accessible to the public in the 1890s. They were also among the first to send their youth to attend Tri-Chandra College, when it opened in 1890. During Rana times, the Newars not only made use of these limited opportunities at home, but also sent their offspring to India and as far afield as Japan.

Rivalry and competition for patronage by the Ranas took the form of that typical Nepali institution called *chakari*, or visible demonstration of personal or familial loyalty. Bitter rivalry was an invariable part of the social history of powerful and influential Bahun and Newar families during the Rana century. One notable rivalry between Bahun lineages, for example, was the feud between the Kumais and the Purbiyas, those with origins in Kumaon and those who had settled further east. This was reflected in the personal conflict between Badaguruju Hem Raj Pandey and Ram Mani Acharya Dixit during Chandra Shumsher's reign.

The social and political competition between the Bahuns and the Newars has deep historical roots as these two communities were the first to enjoy the fruits of Rana patronage, access to civil service and opportunities for modern education and training abroad for the learned professions. With their higher literacy rates, Bahuns, Chhetris and Newars make up more than 70 to 80 per cent of Nepal's trained manpower—excepting the army and police. 28 years after the overthrow of the Ranas, when a survey on the social and ethnic composition of higher education enrollment was conducted by Tribhuvan University, it was found that out of its total enrollment in 1979, 45 per cent were Brahmins, 20 per cent Chhetris, and 19 per cent Newars.

Now that democracy has arrived once again in Nepal, this hold of the three communities on the strategic roles and elite functions in society is unlikely to stay where it was. And, education, as much as politics, probably holds the harmless key to social change, particularly education

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3 See Grishma Bahadur Devkota, *Nepalko Rajanaitik Darpan* Part I, 2016 BS, pp. 28-33, for the full list.

for the socially and economically disadvantaged communities of Nepal, such as the Tharus, the Tamangs and other Tibeto-Burman-speaking communities.

The recent outbursts against brahmanism are not, therefore, too unexpected. When the Nepali Congress supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh voiced his discontent at the political appointments made by the elected government, which went mostly to Bahuns, he launched what some local papers called 'a crusade against brahmanbad'. Unfortunately, the term 'brahmanbad' is a total misnomer here because historically speaking 'brahmanbad'—brahminism—is a religious outlook which gives a crucial place to sacrifice and rituals characteristic of the Vedas and the Upanisads. It has nothing to do with Bahuns pushing Bahuns to the top of diplomatic service, for example.

Nor does 'brahmanbad' have anything to do with fatalism, allegedly a typical outlook of Bahuns and inimical to Western-style development. Both Ganesh Man Singh and Dor Bahadur Bista, through ideas introduced in his recent book *Fatalism and Development*, have done a great disservice to the Brahmins' love for learning, their intellectualism and application—not to speak of their traditional role in Hindu society as ritual specialists with near-monopolistic knowledge of the scriptural texts.

The inborn instinct for survival, particularly political and economic survival, is too strong a propelling force among the Bahun community. If survival is the surest test of fitness, the Bahuns have done remarkably well under every political regime—the Shah-Rana, and the partyless as well as multiparty ones. All the ruling monarchs, not to speak of the princelings of doubtful descent, roughly from Manadeva (AD 464-505) to King Birendra (1945-) may have been led to believe by their counsellors that Nepal is *asil Hindustani* and they—and they alone—are the true Defenders of the Faith, the true *Hindupati*. This illusory pedigree and cultural legitimacy is enshrined just as much in the modern democratic Nepali constitution with sovereignty vested on the people of Nepal as in Manadeva's inscription at Changu, installed in AD 464.

The fatalistic outlook could not have been the propelling force behind the Brahmin success story. A propensity for fatalism does not explain the political successes of today's Marxists-Leninists-Maoists with their unending rival claims to political caste purity and monopoly over revolutionary wisdom; neither does it explain the political success of so

many others who are not as enthusiastic about the classless millennium. They may recite the *Gita* in private or preach selfless action in public, but Bahuns are anything but 'fatalists' in social and political practice. If any section of Nepali society has perfectly internalised 'the Protestant capitalist work ethic' and its accompanying cult of acquisitive success, it is the Bahuns. Without relentlessly pursuing success, how could they have dominated every field of Nepali public life just in a matter of a few generations since the creation of the Nepali nation-state? You name it—rightist, centrist or leftist politics, the media, literature diplomacy, civil service—you will invariably find Bahuns at the top, if not dangerously close to it. Fatalism certainly did not carry them so close to the peak.

On his return from the seminar on democracy and ethnicity in England recently, Nepali Congress Party President and former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai once again broadcast his sanguinity when, in an interview given to Nepal Television he said, though not in so many words, that democracy is the ultimate solution to all ethnic problems. Just look at the voter...behaviour in the Tarai, he said, Sadbhavana could have swept the polls. And the Mongol candidates would have swept the east, Just see what happened. Both were rejected and swept aside by the well-behaved Nepali voters.

One so much wishes that 'Kishunji's' optimism and his confidence in the healing capacity of democracy were a shared experience in South Asia. 45 years of democracy, punctuated once in a while by Pandit Nehru's linguistic states solution or the Mandal Commission Report, have left ethnic nerves in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir as raw as ever before.

The aggrieved sentiments of the Tarai, the Janajatis, the Matawalis of the Hills, and the Newars of the Valley may be fake political gimmicks, but the two millennia of Brahmin domination in the social and cultural life of Nepal's recorded history is not. So far, these sentiments have been expressed in psychological metaphors, often confined to Janajati get-togethers, newspaper columns or Sadbhavana public meetings, and rarely if ever in organised political activities of any damaging value.

But, if these sentiments, as expressed by Ganesh Man Singh, Gajendra Narayan Singh, Gopal Gurung, Sitaram Tamang, Suresh Ale, M.S. Thapa and Padma Ratna Tuladhar are translated into organised political movements, then into military action, Nepal will never remain the same. We will all be committing national *harakiri*, unwittingly converting Nepal into a Sri Lanka of the north. The periodic outbursts of these

leaders have, therefore, a cathartic value because now and then they let the steam out of the ethnic pressure cooker or the melting pot, if you like. What might ultimately be damaging to the political prospects of the leading parties is the 'Kishunji'-style overconfidence in democracy as the ultimate solution because such complacency is likely to sweep the brewing storm under cheerful carpets.

One should not, for instance, be surprised if Newars, one of these days, rally round a 'sons-of-the-soil' style movement in sharp reaction against the swarming inroads by *madhesiyas*, *parbates* and *bhotias* (thanks to the construction, carpet and garment industries) whose influx has displaced Newars from their lands and real estates. With his social and cultural fabric of life slowly being destroyed, the average middle-class Newar of Kathmandu today feels like a displaced Nawab of Lucknow after the Loot. He feels like an alien in his own home, pushed too hard against the wall by ever-stiffer social and economic competition with some 20,000 in-migrants every year. The headlong rush is not only robbing Newars of their jobs, open space and unpolluted civic life, but also destroying their culture and treating them as a dwindling specimen of aborigines deserving to be confined to the slum areas of Asan and the vegetable markets of Katmandu.

Let me conclude with the latest so that I need not elaborate any more. With a per capita income of U$ 170, the State in Nepal supports 16 years' free education for the Bahuns who cultivate the Sanskrit language. It spends NRs 32.1 million annually for 690 students at the Mahendra Sanskrit University—NRs 45,000 per student per year. Recently, 77 members of Parliament, representing *all* the five leading political parties, submitted a memorandum to the Education Minister to make Sanskrit 'compulsory from Grade 1 through 10' in public schools.

Astonishingly, this appeal is signed by 'leading Marxist-Leninist leaders such as Jhalanath Khanal, Radha Krishna Mainali and Lila Mani Pokharel. With all their commitment to the slogans of social justice and equality, do these leaders know that the State is already spending NRs 45,000 per Sanskrit student out of the taxpayer's pockets, whereas it has been refusing to spend anything on 25,000 students studying science, management, medicine, education and the humanities in the so-called 'private campuses' of Tribhuvan University?

When one delves deep into the recesses of the political manoeuvre to make Sanskrit compulsory to 3.4 million Nepali children at school, for

many of whom not even Nepali is their first language, one unwittingly bumps into naked bahunvada and mediaeval feudalism running amok in the garb of New Democracy or infant democracy. *Viva l'infant terrible!*

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14

The Relevance of Nepāla Saṃvat

The Origins

Nepāla Samvat was founded on Thursday, 20 October, AD 879, during the reign of Thakuri King Raghavadeva (ca. AD 879-942). According to a mid-14th century Sanskrit chronicle an epoch era was dedicated to Lord Pasupati (*Paśupatibhaṭṭārake saṃvatsara pravṛtakritāh* during his reign.) This has led some historians to surmise that 'the foundation of the era was due to some religious event connected with the national shrine of Pasupati Nātha'.[1]

Early palm-leaf manuscripts dated in Nepāla Samvat (NS 28 and NS 40, i.e., AD 908 and AD 920) are extant in Nepalese collections. The earliest mediaeval inscriptions are dated in Nepala Samvat. However, at that time it was simply known as Samvat. The name, Nepala Samvat, was used for the first time in NS (AD 1170). Early mediaeval, mediaeval and late mediaeval epigraphy and documents are dated and computed according to this lunar calendar.

The later vernacular chronicles compiled in the 19th century narrate a commonplace tale about the founding of this epoch era. According to one of these chronicles edited by Daniel Wright:

> When Ananda Malla reigned in Bhaktapur, and his elder brother in Patan and Kantipur, a certain astrologer of Bhaktapur found out an auspicious moment, at which he said that sand, taken from a certain

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1 Petech, 1958.

> place, would turn into gold. The Raja Ananda Malla having ascertained the exact time, sent a number of coolies, to take up sand at that particular moment, from the place called Lakhu Tirtha, at the junction of Bhatikhu and Vishnumati, and to convey it to the Raja's palace. The coolies did as they were directed, but, as they were going back with their loads, a sudra merchant of Kantipur, named Sakhwal, prevailed on them to take their loads of sand to his house: and then the coolies filled up their baskets again with sand from the same place as before, and took it to Bhaktapur. Their second loads, however, not being taken up at the auspicious moment, did not turn into gold, and the Raja, being enraged at the imposition practised on him, burned the book. On the other hand, Sakhwal, having obtained so much wealth, with the permission of Jaya-deva Malla, paid off all the debts existing at that time in the country, and thus introduced a new era into Nepal, called Nepal Samvat. He then...placed a stone image of himself at the southern door of Pasupatinath.[2]

The veracity of this tale is difficult to test. For one thing, the chronicler has got the names of the ruling kings wrong. The kings belonged, not to the Malla dynasty, but to the pre-Malla dynasty of Thakuri Kings. The event belongs to a period of Nepalese history generally called 'the Dark Period' because of the absence of reliable source materials such as coins, inscriptions and other contemporary documents. This has made the search for the origins of Nepāla Samvat difficult.

Although we know the exact date of the founding of Nepāla Samvat, we do not know why it was founded. The only traditional explanation is the one offered by the later chronicles. The French Orientalist Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935), an influential authority on ancient Nepalese history and culture, speculated that the era was founded by deducting 800 years in the Saka Era because the Nepalese thought 8 to be an inauspicious number. It is worth remembering that some three hundred years earlier, an epoch era was funded—just two years earlier than the beginning of Saka Era 500—in AD 576. Although a later manuscript calls it Mānadeva Samvat and Tibetans call it Aṃśuvarmā Era, the origins of this epoch era, too, are shrouded in equally impenetrable darkness. Lévi also suggested that the Nepala Era was founded to celebrate Nepal's

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2 Wright, 1877.

deliverance from the Tibetan yoke following the breakdown of Tibetan power after the murder of King Glang-der-ma in AD 842. Both these theories are rejected by Nepali historians. The actual gap between Saka Era and Nepāla Era is 802 years, not 800 years, just as the actual gap between the Saka Era and the Mānadeva Era is 498 years and not 500 years. In one case, a new epoch era was founded two years after the close of the 8th century of Saka Era.

Nepāla Samvat, Sakhwal Samvat and Sankhadharakrta Samvat are all later names for this epoch era. The local tradition that it was founded on the occasion of the 'cancellation of everyone's debts' is of uncertain antiquity. Recently, an American Tibetologist informed me that there is a late mediaeval Tibetan manuscript which dates the era 'according to the year of the cancellation of debts'. The colophon can provide us with a substantial piece of evidence in support of the local traditions.

The story narrated in the later chronicles—at least in the form it exists—may not be of great age. The chronicler wrongly places the event in the Malla period, particularly when rivalries among the three kingdoms were somewhat rife. It even smells of malice towards the people of Bhaktapur. On the other hand, although the chronology is wrong—as it generally is with vernacular chronicles—the tradition as such may be right. There are two interesting clues in the tradition which are worth analysing: the name of the merchant who cleared all the outstanding debts and the connection of the epoch era with the shrine of Pasupatinatha.

While the mid-14th century Sanskrit chronicle positively calls the era *Paśupatibhaṭṭārake saṃavatsara pravṛtakritāh*, later chronicles merely mention the fact that the founder had his statue erected at the southern door of the shrine. Pasupatinatha being the national shrine since the dawn of Nepal's recorded history, the consecration of the era in its name is not impossible. That it certainly had something to do with this shrine is indicated by later chronicles as well: Sakhwal had a stone image of himself erected at the south gate of the shrine after founding the era.

The legendary founder's name has two forms—Saṅkhadhar (Sanskrit) and Sākhwāl (Prakrit). Later chronicles call him a *śūdra* merchant. The colloquial name is an interesting linguistic clue. Most Newar traders with Tibetan outposts used to have *sakha kothā*, credit or transaction room. In Bhaktapur, in a locality known as *Kwā* (tha) che, there still is a room called *sākha kotha*, reportedly a room where the kings used to have

transactions in cash or credit with merchants. In Prakrit (Hindi), the word *sākha* means trade, transaction as well as credit. Thus, the name Sākhwāl probably meant a merchant or creditor.

Mha Puja: The New Year's Day

The New Year's Day of Nepala Samvat (*Kārtika śukla Pratipadā*) coincides with a family celebration among the Newars, both Buddhist and Hindu, known as *mha pūjā* (literally, body-worship or self-worship). Although the puja is evidently inspired by the *puranas* and *tantras*, it is a unique Newar festival, quite different both in form and content from the Hindu festival of Govardhan Pūjā commonly observed by non-Newars in Nepal.

On this day, all the members of a Newar family sit in a row, each member facing a fully decorated *maṇḍala* (circle). Irrespective of age or sex, all the family members are worshipped in turn by the eldest woman of the family. The *maṇḍala* is a series of concentric circles, each drawn in turn by water, oil, rice, paddy and yellow and red powders. At the centre of each circle, a compact group of five circles is drawn, each covered by paddy and rice, decorated with flowers and ritual thread known an *jajamkā*. The inmates of the family are each offered a burning oil-fed wick known as *khelu-itā*. Originally, it measured equal to the length *(dhul)* of a human face *(khe)*. Finally, the auspicious *sagun* is offered, consisting of whole boiled-and-fried egg, accompanied by other *makaras matsya* (fish), *māmśa* (meat), *madya* (wine), *mudrā* (fried ginger) and maithuna (bean cake). The oldest woman of the family wishes each member of the family a long life—a wish symbolised by the offer of a present consisting of walnuts, jackfruit, common citron and above all *gwae swan*, the long-lasting nut-shaped velvety flower.

Newār Saṃvat?

Some refer to Nepāla Saṃvat as 'Newar Samvat'. The Prakrit word *Newāra-Nevāla* is only a colloquial variant of the Sanktritised classical word 'Nepāla'. Whereas the word 'Nepāla' goes back at least to the 4th century AD, the earliest attested incidence of the word *'Newāra'* is in AD 1652. Nepāla Saṃvat was founded 321 years before the Mallas arrived in the history of the Nepal Valley. It has, therefore, little to do with the Mallas, and the Mallas have less to do with the Newars. There is no documentary evidence to show that the Mallas had ever described themselves as 'Newars'. The Malla Kings used Nepāla Saṃvat just as their predecessors,

the Thakuri Kings, did. The Mallas were finally 'lost' among the Newars just as their predecessors the Thakuri Varmans, the Licchavis, the Abhira Guptas, the Kirātas, the ancient clans of Sakyas, Kolis and Vrjjis were all absorbed into the matrix of the Newar social structure. The much-maligned people known today as the Newars are the offspring of at least two millennia of miscegenation between the aboriginal Tibeto-Burmans and the Indo-Aryan immigrants—inheriting the language from the Tibeto-Burmans and the social and cultural systems from the Indo-Aryan ancestors.

The Newars have preserved numerous features of ancient Nepalese religion, culture and social organisation. Needless to say, both on formal and informal occasions, for ritual and non-ritual purposes, the Newars alone have continued to use Nepāla Saṃvat for well over a millennium. By now, enough documentary evidence has accumulated to prove that Nepāla Saṃvat was in use, not only inside the Nepal Valley but also outside of it, including in Tibet. Nepala Samvat may be called Newar Samvat only if we are also willing to call the entire high culture that evolved in the Nepal Valley in the last two thousand years 'Newar Culture' rather than the culture of Nepal. If we were to boycott all this as Newar Culture, how much of Nepalese culture will really remain, other than, of course, the Rana palaces and their French windows?

Official Boycott and Recent Revival of Interest

The official boycott of Nepala Samvat, and the adoption of the Vikrama Era, began in AD 1903, during the fateful reign of Chandra Shumsher Rana (1901-1929). It is relevant to note here that the origins of the Vikrama Era are obscure. It has very little to do with Nepal to install it as the national era. Even India, the place of its origin, has rejected it in favour of Saka Era, by installing the later as its national era. However, in Nepal, Ranas adopted Vikrama Era merely to flatter their family pride and prove their 'Rājput' or Solar origins.

The legendary founder of the Vikrama Era (57 BC) was Vikramāditya, who drove the foreign Sakas out of Ujjayini, the capital of the Kingdom of Avanti. This is the legend. As far as history is concerned, the King who took the title of Vikramāditya (the Heroic Sun) and drove the Sakas from Ujjayini was Chandra Gupta II (ca AD 376-4315), who lived some four hundred years later than the founding of the Vikrama Era! In the earliest inscriptions using this era, all from Western India, it is not called Vikrama

Samvat; it is simply called *malva krta samvat*, i.e., handed down by the Malva tribe—a tribe of uncertain origin in Central India.

Lately, there has been a renewal of interest in the more organised celebrations of New Year's Day (*Mha Pūjā*) according to Nepal Samvat. Both within and outside the Valley, more and more people are rallying around for the celebrations. Some observers find this an inscrutable development. Hostile critics call it a wave of fanaticism. But the reasons for the renewal of interest are not far to seek. Numerous elements of genuine local culture are increasingly threatened by a pallid version of the pseudo-nationalistic culture propagated by the official media and the educational network. One has only to listen to the Radio Nepal—the round-the-clock relay centre of Indian film-songs and Western rock—to find out for oneself how 'nationalistic' this culture is.

Some sections of Nepalese society have been at the forefront in these celebrations. This may not be merely accidental. They are deeply concerned at the total overshadowing of their ancient culture, language and literature by the social and cultural values of the politically dominant ruling classes of Nepal. Nepāla Saṃvat may have been a symbol, lately discovered by a beleaguered people, to rally around in defence of a culture and ethnicity increasingly submerged under the bulldozer of the official media.

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Some Recent Publications on Newār Culture and Identity: Brief Reflections

Newa Samskritiya Itihas by Surendra Man Shrestha; Indra-Jawahar Charitable Trust, Kathmandu, NS 1129; pp. 200; Rs 200; ISBN 978-9937-2-1441
Newa Samskrtiya Mhasika by Laksaman Rajvamshi; Nagarjuna Publications Private Ltd, Lalitpur, NS 1128; pp. 222; Rs 250; ISBN 978-99946-853-3-2
Nepalka Newārharu: Pahichan ra Pristhabhumi by Dr Tulasi Narayan Shrestha; Institute for Research and Development, Kathmandu, 2010; pp. 267; Rs 335; ISBN 978-9937-2-2069-9.

A few weeks ago, a well-wisher mailed me three recent Nepalese publications on culture and identity of the Newāh community, apparently for review. All three authors, like most of us, are currently in search of the common denominator called Newāh identity or culture. As all three authors are equally noted scholars what they have to say has considerable value for the social sciences as well. A few thoughts are given below as preliminary reflections. I propose to discuss them in brief, leaving more elaborate analysis for future, with some critical reflections on the changing perceptions of Newār identity and culture.

Among the three books, Surendra Man Shrestha's is a handy reference work on Newār culture. Earlier, he collaborated with Baladev Juju in *Tantric Worship and Deities of Nepal* (NS 1105) and *Kantipur* (NS 1108), and a decade later, in 1998, he also published a monograph on Newār domestic architecture. Although the recent book is entitled 'the history of Newāh culture', it is a reference book, a treasure room of unexpected beliefs, hearsay, superstitions, legends and tantric lore of the Newārs. Written in

cozy style it is, unfortunately, loose in structure and argumentation. His easy-going style makes us feel at home as if we were listening to him in person, but uneasy at his wayward approach. Some 98 short write-ups on cults, beliefs, superstitions, rites of passage, feasts or festivals, *guthi, āgama,* etc, are assembled in one place in an order which is neither thematic nor alphabetical. The compiler believes that 'culture is a system different from religion, and that each author has his own way of looking at it'. He believes that '(his) culture is living, and not a dead culture, displayed in a museum' (pp. *gha-nga).* The problems with this publication begin here.

To begin with, one does not know why or how the given topics are selected. Some are merely quotes from inscriptions and introduction to other publications. Some deal with prehistory, others with myths. Some entries cover several pages, others are only a paragraph long. The author does not outline his approach to culture nor the aim of the compilation. 'The history of Newah culture' is a project he took up at the behest of his friends, and it is evidently a challenge for any author. Had it a less pretentious title, the book could have been used at least as a 'general knowledge' book, or as a reference book on selected topics of interest to the author or some readers, for example, sitting for a quiz contest.

Fascinating though the book is as a source of scattered information, it is too difficult to search any topic. There is a 'Table of Contents', but it is misleading for searching. The contents mention '*Samskriti va Dharma*' on p. 183, but in the text it is in p. 182! The rites of passage are briefly dealt with in pp. 131-176. Just as the sequence of topics is arbitrary their treatment has hardly any consistency of approach. The pieces have more of the flavour of 'personal essays' than of cultural history. With a little effort, most of the pieces could have easily been grouped into sub-headings and chapters. For example, under the sub-heading of pūjā topics such as *cahrhe pūjā, dyah pyākham pūjā, paũcamakāra pūjā, nimantraṇā pūjā, jogi cakra pūjā,* etc, could have come. Similarly, *āgam chem, āgam, āgamdyaya dikṣā, iṣṭadevatā, dyahchem, degu dyah,* etc, could have come in a group. At the end of reading it, the book leaves us wondering what history is, if not confused what constitutes Newāh culture.

An accomplished writer in fiction and an educationist, Rajavamshi avoids that mistake of treating each topic in isolation. His book too serves as an accessible and handy glossary of 436 selected terms in use in our social and cultural life. They are, however, *grouped* under the 13

subheadings—rites of passage, dress and ornaments, food and drinks, utensils, means of carriage, localities, feasts, the ritual roles of select castes, and festivals. Although it is written in Nepāla bhāṣā and translated into Nepali, a useful glossary in Nepali is provided for each term. The publication is also furnished with clear line-sketches of objects.

The book begins with an Introduction to Newāh identity where the author argues that 'Newāh identity is related to Newāh philosophy' (p. 3). The unique nature of Newāh philosophy 'began to erode with the arrival of Hinduism and its formal cults'. 'The unique features' of Newār social and cultural practice are precisely what the author sets out to catalogue and gloss in the book. Evidently, he thinks of these 'terms' as 'the identity marks', or finger-prints of the Newārs, if you like. How far Newāh ideology, their social and cultural systems are influenced by Hinduism is a complex subject deserving detailed investigation on its own. We wish the terms were more inclusive, at least less selective.

Unfortunately, the cultural 'finger-prints' are neither unique nor shared by all castes, nor practised at all Newār settlements within the Valley, its periphery, much less outside the Kathmandu Valley. Inspired by the Hindu/Baudha tantras or purāṇas, the Newārs are said to be intoxicated with jātrās, feasts and festivals; they are known for their madness for gods and godlings, but those worshipped as key deities differ from locality to locality, from caste to caste, from settlement to settlement. The Pradhāns of Thamel are Buddhist; whereas the Shilpakārs are Urāy by caste but Viṣṇavas by religion. The Newārs of Khonā do not celebrate Mohanī. The inhabitants of Tokhā as well as the Kumhās of Thimi do not have Mhapūjā. Not all castes have Degu pūjā nor do all castes have a tantric *āgama*. More than one-third of the community do not even speak a common language—believed to be the sole binding link among the Newārs. Although 85 per cent Newārs call themselves Hindu, even among the followers of the Mother Goddess/Ajimā cults, some worship seven, others eight or nine, while the Shresthas in Lalitpur worship Ten Mahāvidyās! The Ugratārā of Buddhists is a Mahāvidyā to Hindus. The same cult of Bungadyah is Lokanātha, Matsendranātha, Avaloketiśvara to some—an androgyny, a siddha who was at once a Kaula, a Śaiva Nātha and a Buddhist saviour for others. Their priests range from orthodox Vedic Brahmins to heterodox Śaiva Kapālikās, from esoteric Buddhist tantrics to monks and nuns living and practising pristine monastic Buddhism. As they worship a diversity of cults some

social scientists hesitate to identify the Newārs as adherents of any formal/organised religion. They have no common scriptures nor any shared religious institution or authority, certainly no Golden Temple, no Potala Palace, nor any Vatican, or Mecca. If religion is defined as a set of theology, pantheon, scriptures and rituals guarded by a priesthood, the Newārs have each a religion of his own! So, in isolation or collectively, the selective terms might not be the absolute markers of Newār cultural identity.

In the past centuries, the communities which migrated out of the Kathmandu Valley preserved their cultural memory by erecting the temples of Nāsah dyah, Gane dyah, Bhin dyah, or by observing Gāi Jātrā, Lākhe Nāch or Hanūman Nāch in their new settlements. Those who left Nepal to work or live overseas still observe *Ihi* or *Kayetā Pūjā* in Maryland, *Jhoh Bhoye* in Texas, or group *Mha Pūjā* in London! Small but dedicated groups are still working to preserve language, script, religion and culture to the best of their ability in not-too-hospitable countries. I was stunned when a correspondent from Dubai wrote me asking for my 'personal opinion on when to celebrate *Mha Pūjā*' as if what I tell him would have carried any weight.

These days the word 'identity' is overused at best and brandished at worst, and in the hands of unscrupulous and self-seeking politicians, it is loaded with emotive semantics. However, as Nobel-laureate economist Amartya Sen argues, each individual has several contesting identities, often conflicting and divergent.[1] Any attempt to limit it by exclusion is, in Sen's analysis, 'an illusion of destiny'. If not properly understood, identity may be an unending source of conflict and in some contexts and places, of relentless violence. How much misused it may be, is well documented by Amin Maalouf in his book. Of immediate interest to us would be 'Taming the Panther'.[2] In Brave New Nepal, the need to belong is as likely to lead to violence as any other aspiration The taming of ethnic 'panthers' is likely to be a difficult political project now that we have 28 official parties with 102 armed groups championing limitless causes of 102 ethnic groups!

Although all three books approach the complex issue of 'identity' in their own ways, they give primary importance to cultural practices, rites

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1 Sen, 2006, pp. 18-39

2 Maalouf, 2007, pp. 120-158.

of passage, religion and the castes/sub-castes, as if these are the hallmarks of Newār identity. None gives due importance to the fine arts, such as painting, sculpture and architecture in which Newārs excel as famed masters. There is little about the literate culture, less on epigraphy and vast textual treasures.

When someone asks me, 'Who are you?', I might, of course, instantly reply by giving my name and surname, or nationality, or place of residence, or profession, or secular status, or religion, or pieces of information recorded in my Identity Card or Passport or Citizenship Certificate. To these, one can go on adding further details and specifications. You are soon put into a pigeon hole or slot, depending upon who is asking, or what information is being sought. You are soon classified and slot into a single ethnos. That may not be exactly where you feel you 'belong'.

If anyone asks me about my 'religion' I will be nonplussed. As I was initiated as a *vatuka*, a novice, by an Upādhyāya by reciting the Śiva Gāyatri into my ears I cannot tell that I was born into a family with no faith. My *degu-dyah* is an aniconic slab of stone in Pharping, midstream of river Vāgmatī, identified by my ancestors as Gopāleśvara Mahādevaù but also worshipped as a Vītarāga by the Buddhists. My *iṣṭadevī* is Mahālakṣmī with nine heads and eighteen arms. But the only scripture close to my heart is the *Dhammampada*, which I carry everywhere I go! In troubled hours of life I recite it, but never pray to anyone.

Like all human beings, most Newārs live in a social network and follow cultural systems in a state of flux, confronted by forces which are intricate and complex, bound by interlocking ties, as it were. If we isolate only one or other aspect of these ties we will only be mistaking a part for the whole.

In the early 1970s, French anthropologist Toffin published a brief but perceptive paper, outlining the gaps between ethnic aspirations and social and historical facts.[3] Later, Gellner took up this theme to evaluate Newār ethnicity, ancient and modern, and discussed the problems of defining it in terms of four parameters: caste, territory, religion or language.[4] Quigley joined the debate by showing that there cannot be any substance to Newār ethnicity 'without Newār nationalism', that is to say, a political agenda.[5]

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3 Toffin, 1975.

4 Gellner, 1986.

5 Quigley, 1987.

Recently, Balgopal Shrestha published an incisive paper showing how confusing the Shrestha caste is as 'a ritual status'.[6] The claims and counter-claims of pure and mixed castes are interminable among this status group.

Nearly synonymous with the name of the country, the word, *Newāra/Newāla* is not older than the mid-17th century. When Pratap Malla used it, he used it for a script, not for an ethnic/cultural group. The word had no ethnic or cultural connotation at all. It simply meant the resident of the valley which was then known as 'Nepal'. In the formation of Newār society and culture a number of historically attested lineages, tribes and clans seem to have been assimilated in its formation. Among others, mention may be made of the Kirātas, the Licchavīs, the Vṛjjis, the Abhīra Guptas, the Varmans, the Karṇāta-Mallas, the Vardhans, the Pālas, the Senas, the Rābuttas, later-immigrant Rajputs, and cultural elites such as the Paúca Draviḍa, the Paúca Gauḍa, the ḍoyas and the occupational groups. A continuous process of racial, social and cultural assimilation lies behind the formation of Newār society and culture—a process which can be peeled off layer by layer over two millennia of recorded history. It is, therefore, not too easy to say what makes a Newār what he is—his surname, caste, profession, trade, religion, rituals, social institutions, language, place of residence, his historical self-consciousness or 'imagined collective self'.

Notwithstanding all social, cultural and religious diversities in this community what binds it together is, presumably, the experience, historical as well as contemporary, of living and sharing together in building a unique urban civilisation in the mid-Himalayan valley based on agriculture, handicrafts and entrepot trade. The majority of Newārs are farmers, traders and artisans *par excellence*, and as earliest known *sārthavāhas* (long-distance traders), as famed *śreṣthins* (master of craft guilds), they were the architects of an urban civilisation and pioneers of the market economy in the mid-Himalaya. As farmers, they are 'the best in Asia', producing three harvests a year in the fertile valley before farmland and orchards were encroached upon on an unprecedented scale after the 1960s.

Two fundamental social and economic changes in contemporary Nepal have critically altered the quality life of Newārs in the Valley: the Land

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6 Shrestha, 2007.

Act 1964 and the abolition of the entry permit for Nepali citizens to enter the Valley since 23 December, 1956. The past tenant-landlord relations underwent a qualitative change, and most of the vital income in cash or kind slowly drained out, leaving Newār social, religious and cultural institutions gradually impoverished. Newār culture began to lose its economic and social foothold as soon as the political patronage changed with the fall of the city-states. The dereliction of duties in the maintenance of the *guthis*, temples, *bahas*, *bahis*, festivals and group rituals and public events became the rule, not its exception, and a gradual process of fossilisation started. The encroachment on tradition has now become so widespread that one cannot even trace many endowments in land for the maintenance of rituals. Many a section in Surendra Man Shrestha's book or Rajvamshi's book are only nostalgic records of this culture in the death-bed. If we ask an educated middle-class urban Newār about some of these topics it is almost certain that 90 per cent would answer negatively. Many details in Shrestha's book (e.g., the seasonal varieties of flowers cultivated in different endowed orchards in the outskirts of Kathmandu to be offered to deities on prescribed days) are totally revealing to me at least.

What is strikingly common to all three books, however, is that they ignore the language of the Newārs—the single potential binder of ethnicity. All three writers are evidently unaware of recent research findings in population genetics of the Newārs, the code that is likely to reveal where our ancestors came from ten millennia ago. According to recent findings based on DNA analysis, 'the deep ancestors' of the Newārs came from the plains of the Yellow River in China about 10,000 years ago, bringing with them the Neolithic culture of wet rice cultivation without traction. Although 43 per cent of Newār 'gene pool' is East-Asian, and 10 per cent Central Asian, South Asia too has contributed 25.7 per cent of their racial makeup.[7]

Although they are racially a mixed stock, several aspects of Newār social and cultural practices ultimately go back to 'the great tradition' of Vedic-Hindu-Buddhist traditions. Their cherished institutions such as the *guthi, āgama, vihāra, degu pūjā, phukī, shāh, nani, twāh*, their arts, architecture, or their festivities and rituals are all inspired by the same common South Asian 'great tradition', with minor local modifications.

Take their language, for instance. The Academy's *Practical Nepālabhāṣā*

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7 See Gayden et al, 2009.

Dictionary gives a distorted picture of the Newāh language as it has, unfortunately, a disproportionate (65 per cent) Sanskrit, Hindi, and English words. However, the basic vocabulary of the Newār language has 28 per cent common words with Chepang, 22 per cent with Tibetan, 19 per cent with Tamang,[8] and our first person singular 'I'—the most important marker of one's identity—is cognate with Kusunda! All scripts used in our literate culture are derived from Brāhmi ancient, based on common orthographic principles. Nearly 80 per cent place names found in ancient Sanskrit inscriptions are, however, NOT Sanskrit. In the 5th century AD, what we call today *Khopva* was known by an ancient place name *Khopring*. Similar place names are to be found even now in Dolakha or in Khotang districts that end with—*pring* as a suffix. We still have place names such as *Sipring* river in Dolakha or *Chipring* VDC in Khotang. These clearly are deposits of the pre-history of the Newārs—traces of the ancestral route before we arrived here in the central valley.[9]

The question 'Who are we?' is, thus, more complicated than we think, or our misguided leaders tell us (that, the Newārs are a nation, or a nation-state, or *bhūmiputra*, aborigines or *janajātis*, etc). Social and cultural anthropologists have, in the last six decades, pondered over the rich, tangled and enigmatic complex called today the 'Newār society and culture'. So far, both Western and Nepali social anthropologists have given us, not only diverse, but conflicting interpretations, depending on their theoretical or methodological leanings, but none too complete nor compelling.

Some inflated, idealised and flattering self-images of the community are best outlined in the 25 'caste profiles' compiled by the Newāh Dey Dabū. It is not easy to assess their value as history or social science, but one may compare these romantic 'self-portraits' with, for instance, French anthropologist Gerard Toffin's excellent publication, or Gellner and Quigley's collaborative ethnography, or Parish's cognitive account. It is difficult to believe that these publications are about the same community, the same social groups or culture. Reading these books by Western scholars and Newār experts is not only like looking at social reality through different coloured glasses of the human mind. They seem to be dealing with totally different universes of discourse.

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8 Glover, 1970

9 See Malla on the place-names as a key to prehistoric settlements.

Social anthropologists find the social organisation of the Newārs deeply stratified, fragmented, and entrenched in introversion, nearly an improvised but miscarried project based on the code of Manu. The ethnocentric leaders, on the other hand, tell us that there are neither untouchables, nor any ritual stratification of high and low castes in Newār society. Most 'conscious' Newārs these days think that they are the sons of the soil of the Nepal Valley. Enlightened Buddhists resent being called Hindu, and Hindu Newārs disown their cultural roots to be classified as 'secular' or indigenous.

The complexity of Newār culture is recently exemplified by the eruption of a public controversy on the appropriate dates for observing *Svanti, Lakṣmī Pūjā, Mha Pūjā* and *Kijā Pūjā*. The official Almanac Committee went strictly by 'true reckoning' of the ending moment of a *tithi*. If a *tithi* (i.e., the 12 degree angular distance between the Moon and the Sun) ends before the sunset, the observation of a *parva* or auspicious celebrations should not take place on that day. Different Newār astrologers follow different authorities—some follow the Vedāāṅga astronomy or mean reckoning, in which there is no missing *tithi;* others follow the later Siddhāntas, which are based on true reckoning, with overlapping/missing *tithi*s. Even among them, there are those who specialise in specific astrology, e.g., casting a horoscope *(jyotika)*, calculating the motions of the planets *(gaṇaka)*, fortunetelling *(daivajúa)*, and forecasting the impact of evil planets *(graha-cintaka)*. However, each camp cited a favourite text as the *śāstra vacana*! Aspiring to show ethnic solidarity, the New Year Celebrations Committee for NS 1131 insisted on following the observations uniformly by all the Newārs in a sequence, obviously for convenience as 'they have done in the past'. To the dismay of pious leaders, the Shākyas, Vajrācāryas and Jyāpūs of Patan observed the festival as the Almanac Committee prescribed! The layman stood confused and confounded.[10] The episode is yet another subtext to illustrate that Newār identity does not consist of uniformity of any single cultural event across the whole community.

The spillover of these conflicting perspectives is partly reflected in our cultural/ethnic politics and aspirations, too. As we do not yet know who we are, we do not know what exactly we want now out of the

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10 See *Nepāla Samācārpatra*, 'Sandarbha' column for 2, 3, 4 and 5 November, 2010, and *Sandhyā Times* for 15 November, 2010.

Movement, either. In the 1980s, our Movement was social-cultural to begin with, and once it was hijacked by the political parties after the 1990s, it did not take a long time to be fragmented and radicalised as a political one for 'the right to self-determination'. Not unlike the consortium of feudal lords in the late mediaeval Nepāla-maṇḍala, the Joint Committee for the Struggle for Ethnic Autonomy comprise 11 different 'national-level' Newār organisations and 25 caste societies!

The next publication comes as a useful source at this point in time. A noted expert of development administration, Dr Tulsi Narayan Shrestha's book on the identity and background of the Newārs is written in Nepali. Though it is written with admirable clarity and cogency of style, the contents of the book have several faultlines. It is not clear to me why the author focuses so much on the caste conglomerates or rituals of the Newārs. Neither ethnicity nor identity can be viewed in exclusive terms of any isolated social or cultural trait.

There is hardly any doubt that almost all Newār rituals are inspired by the classical Hindu/Buddhist *sūtras, purāṇas* and *tantras*. The so-called 'castes' in present-day Newār society are a hopeless mixture of professions, trades, administrative/religious roles and secular functions, superimposed upon a tribal base—the vestiges of the base still visible in the plethora of family surnames derived from plants, animals, utensils and natural species. One has only to get out of the Ring Road to see how Newār society in Nālā, Sāngā, Khonā, Tokhā, Pyāngāon, Pāngā or any of the 31 settlements in the Valley is close to what is called 'peasant society' by social anthropologists like Robert Redfield.

Dr Shrestha seems to believe that the Newārs are at once a nation (or a consortium of city-states, which is what historical *Nepāla-maṇḍala* was), an indigenous group, aborigines, sons of the soil, *janajātis*, immigrants, and so on. What astonished me was his readiness to equate the ethnic identity of the Newār community with a single cultural trait, i.e., the caste system (Chapters 3 and 4) or with their rites of passage (Chapter 5). The main status groups—the Shresthas, the Jyapus, the Tuladhars, the Bare, the Nay, the Sayami and the Kumha—comprise more than 84 per cent of the Newārs. I believe ethnicity or identity is more complex than the Newār caste system which, as Louis Dumont says, is merely 'an imperfect copy of the classical *varṇa* model'. No two authorities agree on how many castes we have—25, 36, 64, or 82 or more, nor do they

agree on their relative ritual status. The farmers of Bhaktapur alone have 420 *kula-nāma*! This is painfully clear if one reads the caste profiles published by the Newāh National Forum. The ritual status of each group is fiercely defended and debated though recently a national conference of 11 Newār organisations and 25 caste councils affiliated to the Joint Action Committee announced on 4 December, 2010 at Bode/Bhaktapur Conference, attended by 700 delegates from 60 districts that the Code for Castes formulated by King Sthitirjamalla in AD 1395 is now 'abolished'.[11] Because of this conceptual framework, Dr Shrestha seems to believe in (Chapter 6) the possibility of 'going back in history', to the restoration of the walled mediaeval city-states where the non-Newārs were driven out each nightfall. He has even a readymade name for it, just as our activists have recently devised a new flag of Newār identity, sadly resembling the national flag of North Korea!

The total number of Newārs in Nepal was only 5.6 per cent of the national population in 2001. Although the Human Development Index of the community, measured in terms of per capita income, literacy rate, life-span, etc, is one of the highest, their grip on political power is slipping day by day. This is in part a fall out of demographic shift, but mainly because of the settlement patterns. Not all 1.24 million Newārs live in the Valley, nor all live in ethnic enclaves in the 12 chosen districts only, identified by some articulate political groups as the historical Nepāla-maṇḍala. In fact, more than 56 per cent live outside the valley. What future will a federal dispensation hold for them, other than more disenfranchisement?

In the Kathmandu Valley, the electoral constituencies for the Constituent Assembly elections were delineated by mixing urban municipal wards with rural VDCs. Among the MPs elected from 15 constituencies of the Valley, there were only seven Newārs. No matter on what basis the proposed provinces are organised, as long as the current electoral constituencies continue there is no hope for the enfranchisement of minorities. Because of the steady immigration in the Valley and the dispersed nature of Newār settlements elsewhere, the Newārs are unlikely ever to enjoy much substantive political power or leverage.

Historically, Nepāla-maṇḍala was a loose consortium of warring feudal lords whose political grip over any defined physical territory in

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11 www.nepalmandal.com.

and out of the Nepal Valley was always a matter of contention, and it was more a part of religious/cultural geography than a historical/political state. Dr Shrestha's hope that a federal province on an ethnic basis in and around the Valley 'will give the Newār community a greater access to political power and leadership or better opportunities for development', (p. 198) is sanguine but a rosy pipe dream.

Everything will, of course, depend upon the degree of autonomy to be granted to provinces in the new constitution yet to be framed, if at all, in the next few months. The competing political parties in the Constituent Assembly will, of course, try to devolve as little substantive power to the local levels as possible so long as they can monopolise the allocated local budget among themselves. That is why there have been no elections to these bodies for more than a decade. Meaningful governance is currently defunct, not only at the centre, but more so at the grassroots. More than 1,000 VDC offices were ransacked during the People's War and some 800 VDCs do not even have a Secretary! In a political process where a limited number of entrenched groups are enjoying absolute power with no accountability, it is difficult to believe that power will ever be devolved to the provinces organised on ethnic identity.

To the chagrin of many social scientists (from Toffin to Quigley) as an organised group or groups, the Newār Movement in the 1970s-1990s was a social and cultural movement. The activists protested against the government decision to discontinue the five-minute newscast in the Newār language on the radio after 13 April, 1965. The protest meetings were organised week after week for a year or two in the disguise of literary or poetry recitations. The national referendum in 1980 encouraged the Newārs to launch a movement for official recognition of Nepāla Samvat as 'national'. A joint delegation of the eight Newār organisations met the then Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari on 14 February, 1994, to submit 12 explicit demands. The demands included such 'harmless' wishlists as official recognition of the Nepāla Samvat, script, language name and 15 more minutes' extra time on the national radio and television! There was no political demand for greater participation or representation in the power structure. With the advent of the People's War in February 1996, particularly after the publication of a paper by Dr Baburam Bhattarai on 'The People's War and the Road to Newār Ethnic Liberation', the activists among the Newārs, too, were increasingly radicalised, and by winter 2006, fifty-two top Newār

activists issued a joint statement demanding an ethnic autonomous state and a secular constitution to be written by a people's assembly.

Engrossed with identity and culture most conscious Newārs now tend to look back at their past with nostalgia. 'Only the vanquished remember the past,' said Herbert Marshall McLuhan, a celebrated sociologist. If the Newārs have no roadmap to the future as a community they may very well have none in 'New Nepal'. That they have not so far thought of any road map is only painfully clear when Padma Ratna Tuladhar, an iconic figure, recently said that Vikrama Samvat should be replaced by the Common Era 'as in India' though Nepāla Samvat should continue as the national epoch era.[12] This came as an anti-climax in the thirty-year-long cultural movement for national recognition for Nepāla Samvat.

Because of their numerical size and distribution pattern the options before the Newārs may be limited: they can go back to the late mediaeval walled city-states to live in isolation in search of an assumed identity and ignore the challenges of accommodating to a nation-state in the making, or they can join the world economy by keeping up with knowledge society and acquire vital new skills, values, knowledge and ever-changing technology to survive in the market. Although we find it difficult to agree with Dr Shrestha's simplistic approach or conclusions, reading his book is worthwhile since it is written by an accomplished specialist and development administration expert.

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12 See, video blog clippings at www.nepalmandal.com/November 9, 2010.

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V

Prehistory in Place-names

16

Linguistic Archaeology of the Nepal Valley: A Preliminary Report

Introduction

This paper attempts to present a preliminary analysis of the non-Sanskritic nominals attested in ancient Nepalese epigraphy. The corpus of the epigraphy consists of 190 inscriptions in Sanskrit inscribed on stone in Gupta script—a syllabic alphabet. Most of them are dated. The earlier set is dated in Śaka Era (founded in AD 78); the later, in Mānadeva Era (founded in AD 576). The chronological span of the epigraphy is between AD 464 and 877. Its provenance is mainly the Nepal Valley, inhabited until recently by the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Newars. Although the language of the inscriptions is Sanskrit, some 246 non-Sanskrit nominals have so far been identified in their running text. Most of these are place-names, names of rivers, canals, springs and other water-sources. Some nominals are the names of tax offices, taxes in kind. There are also a few assorted names of objects and persons.

The aim of the paper is limited. It attempts to assign the non-Sanskritic nominals to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan family of language, mainly by tracing some of the roots to the Bodic division. The paper also attempts to show the relationship between these nominals and the modern Newari language. The second major aim of the paper is to explore the possibilities of using linguistics as an instrument of the pre-history of the Nepal Valley. The non-Sanskrit nominals are documented here as substantial evidence of the 'Kirāta Period' in ancient Nepalese history, for which there is as yet no archaeological evidence other than the statement of the mediaeval chronicler.

In attempting the preliminary analysis of the data, we are conscious of the limitations set by the nature of the material. For one thing, there are variant readings by different authorities, particularly of the non-Sanskritic nominals. The non-Aryan words in the Gupta syllabic script are evidently an unsatisfactory system of transcription. A number of inscriptions are in a state of preservation or readability which is not ideal. We have drawn all our data from Vajrācārya.[1] Although it is not a critical edition, the volume is considered the most authoritative edition of ancient Nepalese epigraphy.

Ancient History and Ethnography of the Nepal Valley: A Background Note

The early history of the Nepal Valley is obscure and legendary. The archaeological excavations at a couple of sites have not lent any evidence datable beyond the early centuries AD.[2] The earliest inscription is dated AD 464. The ancient inscriptions of the Valley were issued by the ruling house of the Licchavis—a clan of north Indian origin whose antiquity dates back to the days of the Buddha. The advent of the Licchavis in the Nepal Valley is ascribed by the chronicler to conquest over the aboriginals of the Valley—generically described in Sanskrit as *kirāta*. The *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, a chronicle in Sanskrit and Newari compiled in ca. AD 1387-1390, mentions two pastoral dynasties—the Gopālas (the cowherds) and the Mahīṣapālas (the buffalo-herds)—as the earliest settlers of the Valley. The chronicle then lists 32 kirāta kings who ruled over the Valley for a total period of 1903 years and eight months. Then the Solar Licchavis arrived and overthrew the kirātas, who ultimately retreated to the east of the Valley. The chronicle specifically mentions that they now live in the river valleys of the Arun and the Tāmākośī. Most scholars tend to identify the kirātas of antiquity with the modern Rāis and Limbūs who call themselves *kirātis* and their homeland in eastern Nepal, *Kirānt*.[3]

The Licchavi inscriptions were official and religious documents issued by the ruling elites—the Licchavi kings, the Thakuri Varmanas and Abhira Guptas as their vassals. These three clans shared political power among themselves for four centuries between AD 464-879. Apart from these three, there are epigraphic evidences of the other immigrant clans of Indian origins

1 Vajrācārya, 1973.
2 Deo, 1968.
3 Lévi, 1905; Chatterjee, 1950; Shafer, 1954.

such as the Vrjjis, the Mallas, the Śākyas and the Kolis. They must have migrated in small numbers and made the Valley their home. But the epigraphy as such is silent as to the incidence of conquest or immigration of the Indo-Aryan speakers. However, on a closer look at the inscriptions, it is evident that there were at least two linguistically and ethnically distinct groups of people comprising the ancient inhabitants of the Nepal Valley. By far the most revealing facts of ancient epigraphy are:

i. Nearly 80 per cent of the place-names are non-Sanskrit.
ii. As toponyms and hydronyms, the few Sanskrit place-names are general in nature. A few are mere Sanskritisations of non-Sanskrit names.
iii. Except for five or six non-Sanskrit personal names, all the personal names traced in the epigraphy are Indic and Sanskrit. Some typical surnames are: -gupta, -pāla, -jīva, -sena, -dutta, -mitra, -varma, -varmā, -vardhana, -varmana and -gomī.

The striking contrast between the linguistic sources of the place-names and those of the personal names suggests two different ethnic/linguistic affinities of the elites and the aborigines, one supplying the personal names and the other, the place-names. The people supplying the place-names, unlike the ones supplying the personal names, must have been living in the Valley

i. for a long time, possibly a millennium earlier than the arrival of the Indo-Aryan speaking, southern immigrants;
ii. in large numbers, at least in greater numbers than the Licchavis, the Abhira Guptas and the Thakuri Varmanas; and
iii. all over the Valley, rather than in small colonies of recent settlers.

The internal evidence of the epigraphy shows a social structure already permeated with caste ideology. The epigraphy attests not only to the existence of the four-fold division of the society into the castes of brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra, but also to a more significant stratification into *aṣṭādaśa-prakrti*, i.e., 18 tribal groups who lived on the fringe of the classical model of the caste system. The earlier pastoral settlements at higher altitudes on the rim of the valley were slowly being deserted in favour of permanent civic settlements based on agriculture,

animal husbandry, metal crafts and trade, including long-distance trade. The river basin of the Bāgmatī and Viṣṇumatī was sprawling with nuclear settlements feeding the focal urban habitations of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.

Among the other surrounding settlements were:

i. North: Tokhā, Dharmasthali, Dhāpāsī, Tusāl, Phutuṅ and Burānilkaṅtha
ii. North-East: Chāngu, Sāṅkhu, Gokarṇa and Boḍe
iii. South-East: Thimi, Nālā, Sāṅgā and Banepā
iv. West: Thāṅkoṭ, Chowkitār, Mālātār, Kisipidi, Balambū, Satugal, Phasinkhel, Icaṅgū and Ādeśwar
v. South: Lele, Chāpāaon, Pharping, Buṅgamati, Sunāguthi, Tistuṅg and Chitlāṅg

The Source Language of the Non-Sanskritic Nominals

Space does not permit the listing of all the 246 nominals here. For a preliminary inventory Malla (1973b) can be used. It is necessary to draw a basic distinction among these nominals between the non-Sanskrit nominals, i.e., the nominals which are not Sanskrit, but may be from Prakrit dialects, and the non-Sanskritic nominals, i.e., the nominals which are not Sanskrit in origin or descent. This paper is concerned with the non-Sanskritic nominals although some marginal comments are also made on the nominals (47 in all) which are not Sanskrit but may have been Prakrit. Hypothetically, the non-Sanskritic nominals in ancient Nepalese epigraphy can be assigned to the three pre-Aryan sources:

i. The Austroasiatic Languages/Dialects
ii. The Dravidian Languages/Dialects
iii. The Sino-Tibetan Languages/Dialects

Of the three, the Dravidian hypothesis is the least tenable. So far, no Dravidian language has been traced in the entire span of the Nepal Himalayas. Jhangad, a Dravidian language of the Northern Kurax Group, has been reported recently from Sunsari and Morang districts of the Nepal Terai. Our data seem to have no connection with the reported material. Among the Austroasiatic languages, only two languages of the Munda group—Satar and Santhali—are known to exist in Nepal.

They, too, are reported from the southern edges of Jhapa and Morang districts—geographically at some remove from the Nepal Valley. The nominals of non-Sanskritic origins traced in ancient Nepalese epigraphy cannot with any justification be assigned to the Austroasiatic sources. In the past, historians and anthropologists have postulated that the earliest stratum of human habitation in the Nepal Valley had come from Austroasiatic sources. Among the first serious Nepalese scholars of the Newars, Regmi held the view that

> At the earliest time the Kathmandu Valley was the settlement of the people closely resembling the Austro-Asiatics, and those got mixed up with the Mongoloid immigrants from the south-east at the next stage...In its antiquity the Newar community was a mixture of three peoples (Austro-Asiatics mixed with Dravids and Mongoloids) before it came in contact with the Aryan settlers. The Austro-Asiatic elements in the Newars must be represented by the Jyapus who form the vast majority of the population in the valley. Their physiognomy is neither Mongoloid nor Aryan nor except in a few cases (do) they show an admixture.[4]

Gopal Singh Nepali also believed that some people allied to Austro-Asians might be the autochthones of the Valley, 'who subsequently disappeared bequeathing their culture to other people who supplanted them'.[5] Chatterjee, too, believed that

> In the Nepal Valley, in certain cases the Mongoloid dialects have apparently ousted Austric speeches; but the latter, while giving way, have managed in some matters to influence the former.[6]

However, Chatterjee did not elaborate how or where the Austric speeches 'manage to influence' the Mongoloid dialects in the Nepal Valley. A more recent view on the Austric origins of the Newars is that of Nicholas J. Allen, a British anthropologist, who argues

> The Newar reliance on the digging stick recalls the paper by Fürer-Haimendorf (1950) in which he proposes that in the late neolithic times

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4 Regmi, 1969, p. 15.
5 Nepali, 1965, p. 32.
6 Chatterjee, 1950, p. 169.

there occurred an extensive dispersal of Munda speakers from the region of Assam; with them they took a culture based on wet rice cultivation without plough or traction carried on from relatively large permanent villages with community houses...The Newar may in origin have belonged to this Munda migration...No other people seemed to have clung so exclusively as the Newar have to the digging stick.[7]

The source language of the non-Sanskritic nominals has been a subject of speculation in the past. Acarya, the late Historian-Laureate of Nepal, assigned them to the dialect of the Neparas—a people of the Austroasiatic origins—a hypothesis which he later on abandoned.[8] He speculated that the dialect was 'pronominalised' in spite of the fact that there was no syntactic information available in the epigraphic data. Regmi assigned the nominals to the Newari language:

> The various names like dulung, khepung are pure Newari derivatives. The language of the inscriptions being Sanskrit, it may be inferred that Newari was then thrown into background as up till now it is.[9]

Vajrācārya, while assigning the data to the Kirata language family (i.e., Tibeto-Burman), is less committed:

> It is possible to assign the place-names in ancient Nepalese epigraphy to the Kirata language family even on the basis of common sense. Yet it is not possible to do so conclusively without analyzing the words on the basis of linguistic science.[10] (My translation from Nepali)

Another Sanskritist is no more committed either:

> At the present state of our knowledge we can only say that these are local names, belonging to some unknown language. It may be early Newari, which otherwise is attested first in the 14th century. They may also belong to an older substratum which preceded the immigration of the Newars, the date of which is unknown. It is therefore too early to

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7 Allen, 1969, pp. 71-72.
8 Acarya, 1953 and 1972.
9 Regmi, 1960, p. 21.
10 Vajrācārya, 1968, p. 8.

decide to which language these names belong. The syllabary structure of the many names of localities and persons mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions does not conform with that of early Newari, but we do not know, of course, whether the structure of Newari had changed considerably or not between the 8th and the 14th centuries. For convenience sake the language of the names in the inscriptions will be called 'Kirati' here, without excluding the possibility that it represents an early form of Newari.[11]

We will attempt to analyse the morphological structure of the nominals later on in this paper since this appears to be the main consideration. However, at this point it must be stressed that the sooner we dismiss the Austroasiatic hypothesis the better. Few of the 246 non-Sanskrit nominals seem to have any verifiable formal similarity with a few well-documented Austroasiatic languages. The most sound argument for assigning the nominals to Tibeto-Burman sources is that they make sense and that the data reveal internal regularities similar to Tibeto-Burman morphology and lexicon. Although a majority of the nominals can incontestably be traced back to a proto-form of the Newari language, the data are much less homogeneous than one would have liked them to be. For one thing, the data come from an area in the culture zone already characterised by language-contact, racial interbreeding, social assimilation and cultural synthesis. It is, therefore, unrealistic to expect a set of data which are totally pristine and unaffected by contact situations. At any rate, we are dealing with a very remote state or states of the language, separated from modern Newari by a gap of well over a millennium, with no connected data for the intervening period. When the earliest written Newari texts of some length begin to be available in the 14th century, the language was already impregnated with Indo-Aryan infiltration and heavy Sanskrit loans.

The Source of the Non-Sanskrit Nominals

Although the ruling elites promoted Sanskrit as the language of ritual, authority and epigraphy in the Nepal Valley, they themselves possibly spoke some dialects of Eastern Prakrit—presumably Māgadhi of Ardha

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11 Witzel, 1980, p. 326.

Māgadhi as a colloquial language of everyday communication. This is evident from some 47 nominals, mostly place-names, attested in the Licchavi epigraphy. Although these words are not Sanskrit, they betray formal characteristics (e.g., geminate and retroflex consonants) which are more akin to Prakrit dialects than to the Tibeto-Burman ones. Their presence in the epigraphy is significant. Their distribution in terms of time and space deserves a comment or two. These names are significantly concentrated in limited areas, and with a few exceptions they are, chronologically, much younger as cultural phenomena. The largest numbers have come from two inscriptions—one from Balambū dated AD 705 and another from Naxāl Narāyaṇchaur ca. mid-eighth century AD. These two inscriptions contain 20 such place-names. The others are mostly isolated incidences in older settlements of Pāṭan, Sāṅkhu, Deopāṭan, Paśupati and Kathmandu (Lagan area). 18 place-names are scattered among these five areas.

In the outlying areas the following settlements have each lent one such name: Boḍe, Nālā, Thimi, Chāpagāon, Lele and Māligāon. Given below is a list of these non-Sanskrit nominals:

1. uḍaṇehusa
2. utthima
3. upabhidhi
4. uparima
5. khātampalli
6. gaṇi
7. gamme
8. goṭana
9. jājje
10. daṭṭaṇadalpasa
11. dholavāsa
12. naḍapaṭā
13. nuppunna
14. parigespullī
15. pālaṇa
16. puṃdaṭṭa
17. puṇḍi
18. puttī
19. punu
20. poṇḍi
21. poulam
22. badra (āli)
23. bālva
24. bemmā
25. bhukkuṇḍikā
26. bhumbhukkikā
27. bhoṭṭa
28. māśa
29. māśā
30. yavadu
31. retā
32. valasokṣi
33. vastum (?)
34. vāta
35. vilivikṣa
36. vaidya (?)
37. vaidyamadagudi
38. vottvorṣso
39. vottrino
40. vodda
41. śaktavṭta
42. sāṭammi
43. sālagambī
44. sistīkoṭṭa
45. svayapuropita
46. hasvīmavillī
47. helītila

The Morphology of the Non-Sanskritic Nominals: Some Notes

What is attempted here is a preliminary analysis of the structure of the non-Sanskritic nominals, mainly by identifying verifiable formal elements

in the structure. It is hoped that, apart from appealing to the semantic criteria in the end, such an analysis can provide us with a safe clue to the nature of the data.

1. Stem + -priṅ suffix
   cu-priṅ
   ya-priṅ
   kho-priṅ
   ma-kho-priṅ
   jol-priṅ
   khul-priṅ
   kha-kam-priṅ
   pu-tham-priṅ
   than-sam-priṅ
   ka-dam-priṅ
   mhu-priṅ
   mhas-priṅ
   pran-priṅ

2. stem + -co suffix
   then-co
   mi-di-co
   khā -rhi-co
   mo-guṃ-co
   brem-guṃ-co
   pa-haú-co
   lum-ban-co
   dhan-co
   kha-re-val-gaú-co
   (ardha)-co

3. Stem + khū suffix
   Teṅ-khū
   japti-khū
   hūḍi-khū
   ca-laṃ-khū
   pi-khū
   lam-khū

4. Stem + -guṃ suffix
   —guṃ
   cho-guṃ
   hara-guṃ
   pa-guṃ

5. stem + -bu/brū suffix
   tham-bū
   sa-lam-bū
   nim-brū
   pri-cchim-bru
   pri-tum-brū
   prom-júam -bu
   mit-tam-brū

6. Stem + -ju suffix
   ta-laú-ju
   fa-laú-ju
   lul-ju

7. Stem + -ko suffix
   a-siṅ-ko
   rip-siṅ-ko
   su-bram-ko
   rhim-ko
   koṅ-ko

8. Stem + -dul suffix
   te-khuṃ-dul
   na-ti-dul
   sā -tun-tī-dul
   tham-bī -dul
   me-kaṇ-ḍi-dul

miṅ-ko
saṅ-ko

bur-dum-bra-dul
sa-phan-dul
(śreṣṭhi)-dul

9. Stem + -gval suffix
   te-gval
   mā-gval
   gī-gval
   yū-gval
   lin-gval
   laú-ja-gval
   mal-rha-gval
   ...-gval

10. Stem + -duṅ suffix
    kā-duṅ
    gani-duṅ
    pha-va-duṅ
    hus-priṅ-duṅ

11. Stem + -diṅ suffix
    gam-pren-diṅ
    jon-jon-diṅ

12. Stem + -laṅ /lum/-lam suffix
    na-laṅ
    dum-laṅ
    kan-ku-laṅ
    gan-su-ḷaṅ
    gol-lam
    ma-kho-du-lam
    lam-khu-lam

13. Stem + -stuṅ suffix
    cu-lastuṅ
    te-lastuṅ

14. Stem + -tī suffix
    lem-ba-tī
    si-ta-tī
    dhe-laṅ-īi
    sā-tun-tī

15. Stem + -bī suffix
    kom-pro-yam-bī
    tham-bī
    jam-yam-bī
    dam-yam-be

16. Stem + -khā suffix
    ke-khā
    sa-laṅ-khā
    ta-ve-ce-khā
    pra-yit-ti-khā
    kan-ka-vat-ti-khā

17. Stem + -mhun-m sufix
    hā-mhum
    ku-mhum
    bra-mhun
    sul-mhun

18. Stem + -maka/-laka suffix
    pā-gum-maka
    gum-di-maka
    ti-la-maka
    kā-da-laka
    pi-kan-ku-laka
    udal-ma-lakapan

19. Some other nominals

e-taṅ
khṛ-puṅ
gi-nuṅ
gul-lam-taṅ
cu-hvaṅ
te-gvaṅ
du-praṅ
dum-praṅ
pan-praṅ
proṅ-ni-praṅ
proṅ-pro-vaṅ
fe-raṅ
ma-thaṅ
mai-siṅ
mā-ti
vil-hiṅ
saṅ-gā

20. Given below are some examples of prefixed elements:

i. Prefix mā- + stem
mā-thaṅ
mā-naṅ
mā-gval
mā-kho-pṛm
mā-kho-dul

ii. Prefix te- + stem
te-gvaṅ
te-gval
te-khum
te-pula

iii. Prefix cu- + stem
cu-stuṅ
cu-priṅ
cu-hvaṅ

iv. Prefix tham- + stem
tham-bī-dul
tham-sam-priṅ
tham-bu
tham-tum-ri

v. Prefix du/dum- + stem
du-praṅ
dum-praṅ
dum-laṃ

vi. Prefix proṅ- + stem
proṅ-júa-praṅ
proṅ-ni-praṅ
proṅ-jnam-bu
proṅ-pro-vaṅ

The above analysis reveals that the source language of these nominals has a morphology consisting of monosyllabic roots and affixes (prefixes and suffixes). According to Benedict, 'The study of Tibeto-Burman morphology is in large measure simply the study of those prefixed and suffixed elements which can be shown to be of some antiquity.'[12] As for the grammar, Shafer writes:

> The 'grammar' of a Sino-Tibetan language consists largely of certain words or syllables that are added to a noun or verb or pronoun...They are usually postposed...This word is always a monosyllable in the four

12 Benedict, 1972, p. 96.

main literary Sino-Tibetan languages and in many other, such as Lusei or Newari. So that Sino-Tibetan languages are generally described as monosyllabic...There are Sino-Tibetan languages...that have disyllabic and even trisyllabic words...This represents the primitive condition, the present monosyllabism being due to degeneration. The primitive polysyllabism was due to 'prefixes' which were not actually prefixes.[13]

Polysyllabīsm can undoubtedly be deceptive in Tibeto-Burman languages. Take, for instance, two modern Newari place-names:

Pākopukhuldyāṅ
Netapāco

The first place-name is merely a compound of pa (slope), ko (beneath), pu-khul (pond) and dyan (terrace); the second, of the following elements: ne (main, focal, central), ta (hillock), pa (slope) and co (peak). Among our data also there are striking polysyllabic nominals such as the following:

Yabramkhāro (place-name)
Gecchimdhāka (court-bearer's name)
āṅglābākasapitā (name of an administrative unit)
kedumbata (personal name)
Gumpadbrim (place-name)

The Semantics of the Nominals

The nominals fall into specific lexical areas such as the following:

1. Toponyms
   a. Names of hillocks nominals with suffix -co
   b. Names of fields nominals with suffix -bu/bru
   c. Names of forests nominals with suffix -gum
   d. Names of slopes nominals with suffix -ko
   e. Names of elevated lands nominals with suffix -duṅ/diṅ
   f. Names of pathways nominals with suffix -khā
   g. Place-names with house/houses as landmarks
   h. Nominals with suffix -gval

13 Shafer, 1966, p. 11.

i. Names of place in general nominals with suffix -priṅ

2. Hydronyms
   a. Names of canals/water sources nominals with suffix-dul
   b. Names of rivers nominals with suffix -khū
3. Tax Administration Terms
   a. Tax Offices
      lingval
      kūthera
      māpcoka
      suli
   b. Taxes in kind
      kasaṣṭhi
      cokhparā
      bhoṭṭa
      phalaúju
      daṅkhuṭṭarthā
      sim
   c. Tax Officers
      tepula
      testum
      piṭaljā
      bramhuṅ
      śulmhuṅ
4. Personal Names
      kedumbāṭa
      sindrira
      gecchimdhāka
      rogamācau
      khāduka
      vottrino
5. Grants
      Gīnuṅ
      digvāra
6. Objects
      kūmhum (ritual seed)
      Bhukkunḍikā (a species of fish)
      yatisā (money)
      hamhum (ritual seed)
      cho (wheat)
      kica (worm)

Suffixes such as *-co, -bu, -gum, -ko, -bī, -duṅ, -khā, -khu*, or a number of roots such as *sim, cho, kica, hamhum, lam, cu, tham, ko, ti, dum*, are authentically Tibeto-Burman. A number of these are still in use in Newari and cognate languages in the same sense.

1. Historical Evidence of the Evolution

There are historical evidences of the evolution of ancient non-Sanskrit place-names into modern Newari place-names which are still in use.

kho-priṅ	kho-pa
mhas-priṅ	mhya-pi
praṅ-priṅ	pham-pi
khāi -nas-pu	khād -pu

Some of the other ancient place-names surviving in modern Newari are given below:

Ancient	**Modern Newari**
teṅkhu	tekhu
kicapriciṅ	kisipidi
bugayumi	buṅga
mākhopriṅ	khopa
khopriṅ	khopa
khṛpun	khopa
sāṅgā	sanga
nālaṅ	nala
kurpāsi	khopasi
lembatī	lele
gullamtam	guita
phutṅn	phutun
satvaumālambā	satungal/balambu
teastuṅ	tilastuṅ
tuúcatcatu	capali
jamayambī	jamal/yam (bu)
theúco	theco
thambū	thainbu
tegval	tyagal
māthan	makhan

The long gap of time and the lack of intermediate data between ancient place-names and modern Newari forms make significant generalisation on the actual stages of phonological or morphological changes difficult. However, some trends are evident: the loss of consonants and syllabification are the outstanding landmarks. But whereas *-priṅ* in *kho-priṅ* has survived as *pa* in *kho-pa*, it has come down to us as *pi* in *mhas-priṅ* and *pran-priṅ*. The motivations for these changes appear to be different depending perhaps upon dialectal, regional, social-cultural and language-contact factors. In any case, contact with the Indo-Aryan speakers is historically evident. This must have been one of the major factors affecting the changes.

2. The Relationship of the Data with the Newari Language

In relating the data to the Newari language, scholars have shown two responses: cautious and committed—both without going into the detailed analysis of the data in totality. If Vajrācārya and Witzel represent one end of the spectrum, Regmi and Doherty (1978) represent another end. Witzel is willing to assign the data to 'some unknown language', at most to 'Kirati language'. He does not rule out the possibility that the data 'represent an early form of Newari'. For him, the main problem in relating the data with the Newari language is that

> The syllabary structure of the many names of localities and persons mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions does not confirm with that of early Newari.

How Witzel came to this conclusion is not particularly clear; but the earliest available written texts of some length in Newari can be consulted, and the syllabic structure of the native Newari stems can be compared with the syllabic structure of the non-Sanskritic nominals found in the Licchavi epigraphy for verifying Witzel's contention.

Many of the roots and suffixes that we have identified in the data are still in use in modern Newari, e.g., *co, ko, du, gal, gum, khu, tham, khā, lú/lam, ti, bī, kica, sim, mi,* etc. These roots and affixes are still used in modern Newari in the same sense as they were in ancient epigraphy. All this is not to deny that the Newari language changed in the last two thousand years. Like any other natural language it must have changed a great deal, particularly because it was spoken in a most active contact zone.

What is not yet clear to us is the exact nature of change or changes and their different phases and causes. On the basis of the available formal, lexical and diachronic evidence (such as the evolution of several ancient place-names in modern Newari), we can safely postulate that the source language of most of these nominals is proto-Newari.

Apropos of the 'Origins' of the Newars

We do not know who the aboriginals of the Nepal Valley were, nor do we know anything about their ethnic or linguistic affinities. In the past, scholars have tended to believe that the Newars were the aborigines of the valley. For example, Fürer-Haimendorf wrote:

> Immigrants from India as well as from Tibet have at times exerted a considerable influence on Newar culture, and some of them have ultimately been absorbed into Newar society, but there is every reason to believe that the bulk of Newar people has been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric times.[14]

The people known today as Newars are a mixed racial stock, consisting of several layers of immigrants from the north as well as the south who arrived in the Nepal Valley at different times in the last two millennia and were ultimately absorbed into the matrix of the social structure and culture system that evolved in the valley. The modern Newars are related to one another, not by descent or race, but by a common culture and language; they are related to one another by the place and function they have in Newar social structure. Already by the end of the first millennium AD, the ancient clans of the pastoral Nepālas (herdsmen), the Kirātas, the Vṛjjis, the śākyas, the Kolis, the Mallas, the ruling families of the Licchavis, the ābhīra Guptas, and the Thakuri Varmanas—all were lost among the aboriginals of the valley in the making of the Newars.

When scholars debate 'the origins' of the Newars, they are—apart from promoting seductive hypotheses—presumably, trying to isolate the earliest stratum in the ethnic composite called the Newars. Some day historians and ethnographers may come up with more convincing evidence in favour of the Austroasiatic, the Dravidian, or the Munda 'substratum' in the language, race, culture or society of the Newars. But

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14 Fürer-Haimendorf, 1956, p. 15.

the non-Sanskritic nominals, particularly the place-names in Licchavi epigraphy, provide us with an irrefutable set of evidence for the Mongoloid ethnic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic affinities of the aborigines of the valley. They fully substantiate the statement of the mediaeval chronicler who assigns a long Kirāta rule over the valley before the arrival of the Solar Licchavis.

The deceptively Sanskrit-sounding place-name *Nepāla* (singular, the country; plural, the people Nepala) is an important clue to the origins of the Newars. The word *newāra* has evolved from *nepāla-nebāla-newāla-newāra*. But as we have tried to show in Malla (1980), the place-name *Nepāla*, like so many place-names in South Asia, is derived from the name of the people who inhabited it. The word *Nepāla* is not an Indo-Aryan word. The Licchavi epigraphy is replete with non-Sanskritic place-names. There are also some interesting examples of Sanskritisation of non-Sanskritic place-names, such as Newari *yala-sim* becoming Sanskrit *yūpa-grāma*, Newari *nwa-khu* becoming Sanskrit *Vāgvatī*, Newari *caṅ-gum* becoming Sanskrit *dolā-śikhāra* and so on. The nominal *Nepāla*, too, appears to be a Sanskritisation of the Tibeto-Burman roots *ṅhet* (cattle)+*pā* (man), i.e., herdsman. In support of this hypothesis, there is first the internal evidence of Licchavi epigraphy itself. As late as AD 512-607 there still was a distinct clan called the *Nepāla* who were addressed to in the epigraphy as *swasti naipālevyaḥ*, i.e., greetings to the Nepālas. The members of this clan lived in the Tistuṅg- Citlaṅg valley during the 6th-7th centuries AD. Even now the small valley beyond the ridge of the Candrāgirī hill continues to be the settlement of cowherds and buffalo-herds. The other substantial evidence for this hypothesis comes from two mediaeval sources: i) the Cambridge University Library Amarakośa, a Sanskrit-Newari lexicon dated AD 1386, defines the Sanskrit word *ābhīrī* in Newari as, 'the daughters and wives of the cowherds of the Nepa clan' (folio 58a); and ii) *The Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, the mediaeval chronicle compiled in ca. AD 1387-1390, also mentions *Nepa* as a primeval cowherd of the valley (folio 17a). The word 'Nepala', thus, appears to be a Sanskritisation on the analogy of *Gopāla*, except that whereas *Gopāla* can be interpreted in terms of Sanskrit etymology, *Nepāla* cannot mean 'cowherd' in Sanskrit. Although the *Nepālas* were known as ābhīras to the Indo-Aryan speakers, they were a non-Aryan racial stock who slowly came under the fold of the Aryan culture,

religion and social structure. The mediaeval chronicler mentions eight cowherd and three buffalo-herd kings before they were overrun by the Mongoloid Kirātas. The origins of the Newars appear to go back to this racial/linguistic encounter between the ancient pastoral Nepālas and the Tibeto-Burman speaking Mongoloid Kirātas. Although originally the word *Nepāla/Nhet-pa* signified a specific clan of herdsmen, in course of time all the people who came to live in the Nepal valley came to be known as *Newāra/Newāla/Nebāla/Nepāla*. In the long run all the inhabitants of the valley who spoke the Newari language came to be known as the Newars.

Conclusion

The main interest of the data we have analysed lies in their historicity. The non-Sanskritic nominals are valuable materials for the reconstruction of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family, the comparative study of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages in which there are only five literary languages with written records of some age. Above all, the data are valuable for the diachronic study of the Newari language. Finally, the data lend much needed support, particularly from the archaeological point of view, to the statement of the mediaeval chronicler who assigns a long Kirāta rule over the valley. At the same time, the nominals are an important index to the ethnography of the ancient valley, providing us with the most valuable clue to the origins of such a complex racial type as the Newars. Where archaeology has hitherto failed the historian, linguistics may serve him as an instrument of prehistory.

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17

River-Names of the Nepal Valley: A Study in Cultural Annexation

Introduction

This paper attempts to analyse the river-names of the Nepal Valley in an ethnolinguistic perspective. The river is an unmistakable element in the topography of any settlement, more so in agricultural settlements where the river may be their life-line. River-names are, therefore, an important index to the linguistic, cultural, and above all, ethnographic history of a settlement.

Ancient river-names of the Nepal Valley are examined in this paper as evidence of prehistoric ethnic contacts between the aborigines and the Indo-Aryan immigrants. Different strata of river-names are documented as evidence of the process of cultural absorption or Sanskritisation.

Sources

Ancient river-names are collated from the extant corpus of Licchavi epigraphy (AD 464-879). Later mediaeval documents, such as land grants and endowment inscriptions, contain some river-names. For modern river-names, the main source used are the Kathmandu Valley Maps (1:50 mile scale). However, these maps use what the transcribers call 'Nepalised' forms of river-names.

Ancient River-Names

Ancient river-names of the Nepal Valley are preserved in some two hundred Licchavi inscriptions. They are all in Sanskrit, engraved in Gupta syllabic script, almost entirely on stone. There are altogether 35

river-names and names of water-sources such as springs and artificial canals. These hydronyms are given below with their dates (where available) and *in situ* location of the inscription:

Date	Hydronym	Type	Location
AD 477	Vāgvatī	River	Devapātan
557	Bunlu	River	Pharping
573	Maṇimatī	River	Patan, Saṅkhamūla
Ca. 595-605	Udalmalaka	Water-Source	Cāṅgu
	Sātunti	Water-source	Cāṅgu
	Burdumbrādul	River	Cāṅgu
	Ripśiṅko	Water-source	Cāṅgu
	Vilhaṅkho	Water-source	Cāṅgu
	Projúajambu	Junction	Cāṅgu
	Proṅnipraṅ	Junction	Cāṅgu
	Proṅprovaṅ	Junction	Cāṅgu
	Dhelanti	River	Banepā
	Tekhuṃḍul	Water-source	Banepā
597	Júātikhriṅ	River	Tokhā
	Tilaṃaka	Canal	Tokhā
	Saṅko	Water-fall	Bhaktapur, Kumhāla Tole
	Sanjarā	Water-fall	Bhaktapur, Kumhāla Tole
613	Custuṅ	River	Tistung
	Cupriṅ	River	Tistung
695	Teṅkhu	River	Lagan, Kathmandu
	Cisimanṇḍā	Canal	Lagan, Kathmandu
697	Mekaṇḍiḍul	Canal	Paśupati
	śreṣṭhiḍul	Canal	Paśupati
705	Putti	River	Balambū
	Lulju	Canal	Balambū
	Yavadu	Junction	Balambū
	Himanadi	River	Balambū
	Utthimanadi	River	Balamdu
	Gollam	Canal	Balambū
	Samvaidya	River	Balambū
Ca. 713-733	Yaku	River(?)	Naxāl
	Japtikhū	River	Naxāl
	Huḍikhū	River	Naxāl

Date	Hydronym	Type	Location
	Vṛhannadi	River	Naxāl
	Laṃkhū	River	Naxāl

Since the dawn of recorded history, the Nepal Himalaya has been the retreat of the Mongoloid Tibeto-Burman-speaking tribes, known to the Indo-Aryans as Kirātas. Hindu, Buddhist and Jain literary sources indicate that the Indo-Aryan-speakers from the Himalayan foothills were in regular contact with the relatively secluded Nepal Valley at least as early as the 4th or 5th century BC. The north Indian traders in wool, the missionaries of India's great apostolic religions, and above all the fugitive Vrjjis, śākyas, Kolis, and Licchavis had begun to penetrate the Nepal Himalaya long before the beginning of the Christian era. There is, however, no unanimity of opinion among scholars on the approximate date of the arrival of the Licchavis in the Nepal Valley. It ranges from 484 BC[1] to the 4th century AD![2] The Licchavis may have arrived as fugitives, but as their influence grew steadily they—unlike other immigrant clans of Indian origins—appear to have subjugated the aboriginal Kirātas of central Nepal, finally establishing their rule in ca. 1st or 2nd century AD. The Licchavi rulers prior to Mānadeva (AD 464-505) were, in all likelihood, nominal feudatories, accepting the suzerainty of the Gupta Emperors of India. As the Gupta Empire began to decline, particularly with Skanda Gupta's death (AD 467), the Licchavis seemed to have consolidated their hold on Nepal. Classical and Puranic Hinduism, Gupta art, Gupta script, and above all, the Sanskrit language arrived in the Nepal Valley with the Licchavis, if not earlier.

Non-Indo-Aryan River-Names

Sanskrit epigraphy is one of the cultural artefacts the Licchavi rulers brought from India. No wonder that out of 35 hydronyms in Licchavi inscriptions only four, Vāgvatī, Maṇimati, Himanadi and Vrhannadi, are Sanskrit. Yavadu, Samvaidya, and Sanjarā may be Prakrit. Yavadu, Himanadi, and Utthima all come from Balambū—a Prakrit strong-hold, and chronologically they are relatively late. The Nepal Valley has no major river system. Among the ones that drain the Valley, the Vāgmatī

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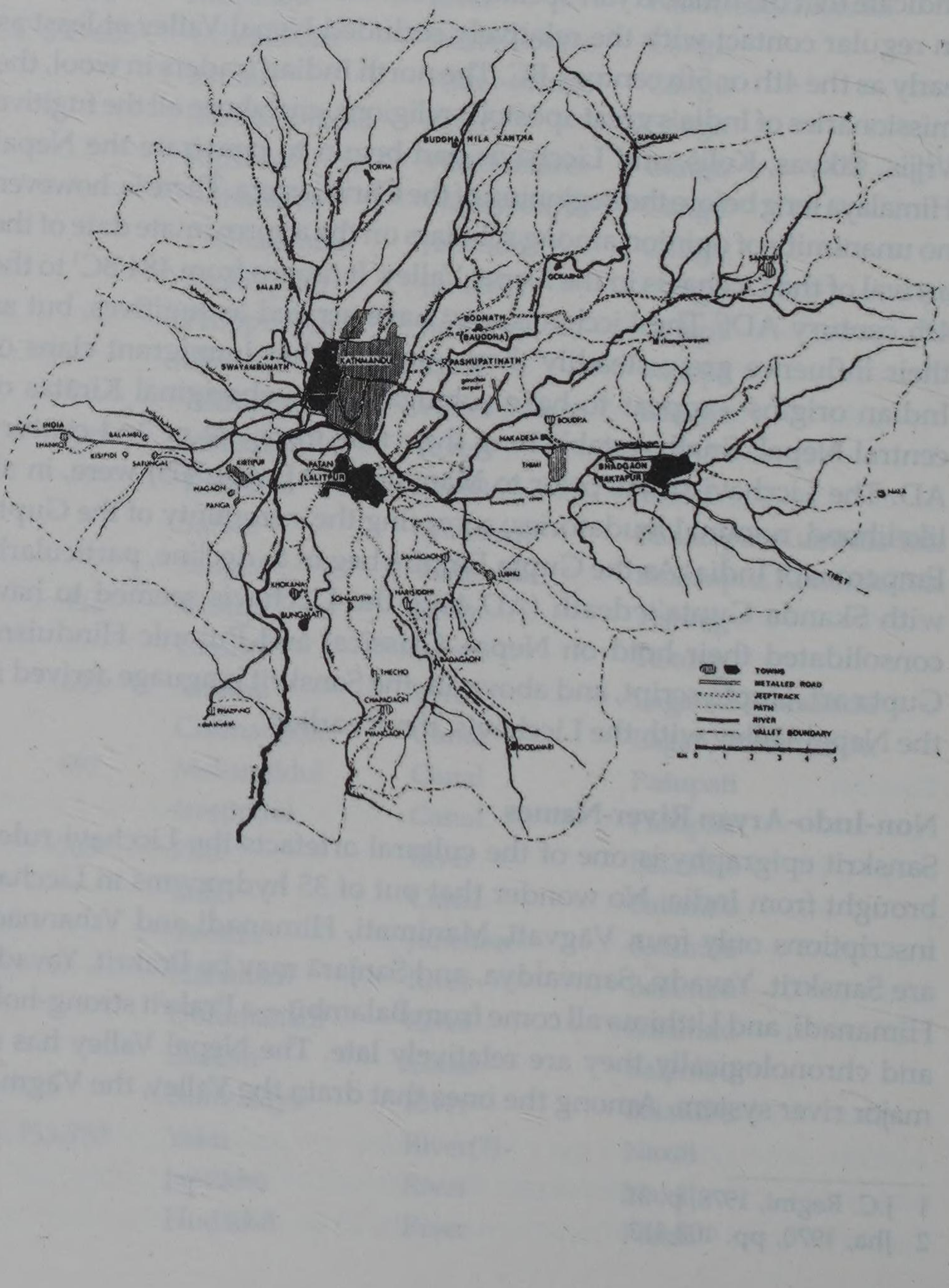
1 J.C. Regmi, 1978, p. 31.

2 Jha, 1970, pp. 100-113.

Main Rivers of the Nepal Valley



and Manoharā alone are the major ones. The Viṣṇumatī was still a peripheral river in ca. AD 590s. Its name was not yet Sanskritised (and was it called Júātikhrn?). Evidently, the major rivers are the first ones to be baptised in Sanskrit, leaving the lesser and peripheral rivers and rivulets undisturbed with their aboriginal names.

In the Sanskrit texts of Licchavi epigraphy, non-Indo-Aryan river-names float, like insolvent flotsam and jetsam. As the linguistic and ethnographic relics of a people already politically and culturally over-run, these river-names reveal several interesting genetic and formal features that can be examined in identifiable groups.

1. Cu+
   cu-stun
   cu-priṅ

2. +ko/kho
   saṅ-ko
   riśiṅ-ko
   vilhaṅ-kho

3. +khu/ku
   the-khum
   teṅ-khu
   japti-khu
   hūdi-khu
   ya-ku
   lam-khu

4. +ti/di
   satunti
   dhelanti
   mekaṇḍi-
   niti-
   japti-
   hūḍi -
   putti-
   júāti-

5. +dul
   burdumbrā-dul
   tekhum-dul
   niti-dul
   mekandi-dul

Of all these non-Indo-Aryan river-names, Teṅkhu/Tekhu alone has survived the full thirteen centuries of social, cultural and political vicissitudes. *Cu* (water/river) has a cognate in several Tibetan river-names. e.g., *dNal-chu, Nan-chu, Ra-chu, Dag-chu, 'Bri-chu, etc. Khu,* on the other hand (with dialectal variants *ko/kho*), is related to Tibetan Klun and Chinese *klun/kon* (river). A Sanskrit-Newari lexicon, dated NS 501 (AD 1381), gives *kho* as gloss for Sanskrit *nadi*. The deaspirated *Kośi*

Klun/*Khosi* drains the Kirant land in Eastern Nepal. Although the Indo-Aryan speakers have Sanskritised all its tributaries, fortunately for us there still is *Likhu* (brass river). The so-called *Indrāvatī Kośī*, one of the seven Kośī rivers, was actually called *Milamchi* or *Milamchu* (*milamha*, the third one) until the AD 1840s.[3] The same appears to be true of the Gaṇḍakī river-system, where *ānkhu* still survives. (Note the Newari child-word for water *ākhu*, and water-pot with a spout, *ānkhudhā*). Till AD 1858, the *Triśūli* (trident) river was known by its aboriginal name, *Salamkhu*, *swa*-lam-khu (three-pronged river).[4]

Ko/kho/khu are more archaic than either *cu* or *ti/di* because the latter roots are Tibeto-Burman rather than Sino-Tibetan. However, what appears ethnolinguistically interesting is the fact that in the Nepal Valley, *khu* is more widespread than *ti/di*—indicating a more primitive stratum of ethnic and/or linguistic contact with the north. For example, we have even today several river-names with *+khu*, *nwa-khu*, *bal-khu*, *sāmā -khu*, *te-khu*, *bhacā-khu*, *ga-khu*, *tu-khu*, *kot-khu*, *tabyā -khu*, and *hijā-khu*, to mention only the familiar ones. *Ti/di* are, of course, verifiable Tibeto-Burman roots for water/river. In modern Newari, however, they have survived, not in river-names, but in such nominal compounds as *hi-ti* (washing water), *lhu-ti* (bathing water), *quā-ti* (lintel broth), *Khi-ti* (body dirt), *ca-ti* (perspiration), and *tun-ti* (well) etc. In the Licchavi epigraphy there occurs an interesting nominal compound tilmaka (canal). The AD 1381 Sanskrit-Newari lexicon mentions *tilam* as Newari gloss for Sanskrit word *kulyā* (canal). In the inscriptions, the word appears in its Indo-Aryan Garb as *tilamaka/ti+lamkha* (liquid water, i.e., flowing water). It is worth noting that just as *khu* is dominant in the Central Nepal Valley, *ti/di* are widespread west of the Valley, particularly in the Gurung-Magar-speaking areas, e.g., Marsyan-di, Darau-di, Ri-di, Tā-di, Myag-di and possibly even Rāp-ti and Se-ti.

As for *dul*, there is no doubt that it is an archaic form of *du*, which survives in such modern Newari river-names as *Doldu*, *Gundu*, *Hundu*, *Khodu* and *Naldu*. The retroflex *d* in the first three names is, undoubtedly, a consequence of the so-called 'Nepalised' transcription, rather like Newari *qāati* becoming Nepali *quāṭi*, and Newari *hiti* becoming Nepali *hiṭi*.[5]

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3 Hodgson, 1848, p. 646; Hodgson, 1874, Part II, p. 5.

4 Hodgson, 1874, pp. 63-64.

5 See Sharma, 1962, for these forms.

River-Myths of the Nepal Valley

The transformation of some of these 'rude', 'barbarous', and 'cacophonous', river-names[6] into the graceful *-vatī-s* and *-matī-s* of the Indo-Aryan speeches must have been a slow but interesting process of cultural conquest and annexation of one naming-system by quite another one. Fortunately for us, there still survives a species of texts in Sanskrit which document the process, albeit in mythical metaphors. Myths do not have dates, but texts are dated or relatively datable. *Nepāla Mahātmya, Paśupati Purāṇa, Swayambhū Purāṇa, Himavat Khaṇḍa, Vāgmatī Mahātmya,* and some of the 19th-century vernacular chronicles, drawing upon the above puranic sources, contain interesting myths about the baptising of the rivers of the Valley. The traditions which this literature draws upon may be older than the texts. But they are clearly an outgrowth of the 15-16th century religious nationalism in the Valley. The oldest known copy of *Nepāla Mahātmya* is dated NS 774/AD 1654; the oldest available copy of *Swayambhū Purāṇa* is dated NS 678/AD 1558. This literature appears to have grown, at least in part, out of the cultural need to glorify and legitimatise the local shrines, particularly the rivers and their confluences, by some or other kind of divine or numinous association. Not only Hindu ideologues but also Buddhist pundits, too, seem to have succumbed to this myth-making urge. What strikes the student of mythology is not the sectarian bias of these puranic texts. What strikes us are the conflicting versions of the same or similar myths pertaining to the origins of the river-names.

Take for example, the myth relating to the origins of the river-name Vāgmatī. According to *Paśupati Purāṇa*, the river got its name because she was born from the mouth of Śiva as he was contemplating the penances of *Pralhāda*. So, she is called *Vāk* (mouth)+*matī* (river). According to *Nepāla Mahātmya*, on the other hand, Vāgmatī sprung out from one of the horns of Paśupati when Śiva transformed himself into an antelope to mislead the gods. The Buddhist version of the river-myth is totally different. It is the very water of the Ganges which sprung out from the rock when it was struck by the Manuśī Buddha Krakkucchanda by the power of mantra or Vāk (speech or magic spell) when he was in search of a stream to ordain the very first Buddhist monks in the Valley. The same is the case of Viṣṇumati. To the Hindus, Viṣṇumati is so called because she began

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6 Acarya, 1938.

to flow, like the Ganges, at the feet of Lord Visnu. The Buddhists, however, call her Keśāvatī because she derived her name from the shaved hairs thrown mid-stream when Krakkucchanda had ordained the first Nepalese monks. The Buddhists connect Manimati to the famous Buddhist Prince Maṇicūḍa who granted the jewel from his head to his suitors on the banks of the river. The Hindus connect it to the jewel-like drops of perspiration of Lord Viṣṇu. Hanūmatī or Hanumante, the main river in Bhaktapur, receives its name from the monkey-god Hanūman, who despite his hurry to reach Lanka, managed to stop for a moment on the banks of the Bhaktapur river (in all likelihood with the aboriginal name Khāsyaṅkhū) only to baptise it Hanūmatiī! Thus. there is no source of water in the Nepal Valley, no matter whether it is a river, or a streamlet, or a humble string of water, without some divine association or a godfather.

The puranic river-myths are unacknowledged statements of the process of cultural conquest of toponyms, and their spurious nature is betrayed by the conflicting etymons and interpretations. What is more embarrassing is that a majority of aboriginal names have survived if only to uncover this cultural subterfuge. Thus, we know how Tibeto-Burman *nwa-khu* (mouth-river or murmuring river) has become Indo-Aryan, *Vāk-mati = Vāgmatī.* Beyond the pale of the urban and Sanskritised culture-belt, the river is still called *nwa-khu* (cf. Newari *nwa*-wa-ye, to speak, *nwa*-sil-e, to wash one's mouth, etc). Now we also know how Newari sugarcane-river *Tu-khu* became Indo-Aryan *Iksumati. Saṅ-khu,* doubtlessly, was the name of the river retained now only by the town, but lost by the river itself for *Maṇimatī. Lakhu* became *Dhanāvatī* because this was the river where the legendary sand was collected which later on became gold, enabling the merchant of Kathmandu, Sākhwā, to pay off all outstanding national debts and found a new era. *Hijākhu b*ecame *Rudramatī, Balkhu* became *Ratāavatī,* and most interesting of all, *Bhacakhu,* shallow or gentle river, became Sanskrit *Bhadramati*!

Recent Phenomena

Unfortunately for the myth-makers and ideologues, a few of these ancient and mediaeval -mati-s and vati-s have survived. The only exceptions seem to be Vagmati, Visnumati, Manohara and Hanumante. This, however, does not mean that the process of cultural annexation is dead or dying. On the contrary, it is now a more militant process than ever

before in the Valley's cultural history. Only a couple of decades ago, Kang-chomolungma, the world's highest peak, was renamed Sagarmatha on the basis of a very dubious etymological interpretation by a pundit.[7] In order to show the more recent trends in hydro-nomenclature, we give below some river-names listed in the Kathmandu Valley Maps:

Aśwa Kholā	Chāpne Kholā
Kalanti Kholā	Lāmbagar Kholā
Bajeni Kholā	Chop Kholā
Kālcure Kholā	Maruwā Khahare
Bākhre Kholā	Damāi Kholā
Kamero Kholā	Māi Kholā
Bihābar Kholā	Dhobi Kholā
Karmanās Kholā	Māiti Kholā
Cārkhaṇḍa Kholā	Ghatte Kholā
Kāttike Kholā	Narkate Kholā
Chārropāni Kholā	Jagare Kholā
Kābhāj Kholā	Paire Kholā
Cihān Kholā	Jantri Kholā
Khahare Kholā	Sāṅglā Kholā
Chāre Kholā	Junge Kholā
Khāni Kholā	Sāṅgu Kholā
Chāre Kholā	Thāro Kholā
Lāmāchaur Kholā	Thulo Kholā

With the exception of *Dhobi Kholā* (obviously, a translation of the Newari *Hija-khusi*, washing-work-river) nearly all the rivers or rivulets listed here drain the periphery *(kānth)* of the Valley. Nearly all these rivulets are in the areas lately settled by the Khas Brahmins and Chhetris and their subservient occupational castes such as Kami, Damai, Sarki, Gaine, Bhat and Dhobi.

The Khas assaults on the Nepal Valley started in the late 13th century AD. Between AD 1288-1328, there were several recurrent Khas invasions of the Valley. However, 'these were only raids carried into Nepal with an intent to plunder the riches'.[8] Pockets of permanent Khas settlements in the Valley were few and far between earlier than the 17th century AD.

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7 Acarya, 1938.

8 D.R. Regmi, 1965, p. 244.

Kathmandu's King Ratna Malla (AD 1484-1520) began enlisting Khas and Magar mercenaries in his army. A major Khas-Magar attack on the valley took place in AD 1525/26 when the Palpa Magar chieftain, Mukunda Sena invaded the Valley twice—once with a horde of 51 and the second time with a horde of 61—and set fire in a number of Newar settlements. But these marauding hordes left the Valley after four days of rampage of destruction.[9] Major Khas immigration and settlement of the outskirts of the Valley was, in fact, encouraged by the later Malla Kings.[10]

However, Bista has recently made a historically and linguistically most incredible claim that there was 'a very heavy influence of the early Khas Prakrit language in the Nepal Valley'.[11] This claim is made on the basis of some Prakrit data collated by me from Licchavi epigraphy.[12] The New Indo-Aryan languages or dialects (of which Khas or Pahari is one) began to diverge from the Middle Indo-Aryan languages or the so-called Apabhraṃśa-s in ca. AD 1000-1200. The Prakrit dialects which entered the Nepal Valley with the Licchavis were Māgadhi in origin whereas the source of the Khas, or Pāhāri dialects is Sauraseni—an entirely different phylum of Apabhraṃśa. Even the Middle Indo-Aryan dialects had not yet been attested, let alone the New Indo-Aryan dialects, when the Licchavis brought their colloquial speeches into the Valley. Therefore, to hypothesise 'a heavy influence of the early Khas Prakrit language in the Nepal Valley' may be comfortable fiction, but not history. The Licchavis were in power in Nepal for the first nine centuries of the first millennium AD. The earliest evidence of Khas Prakrit attested so far comes from a bilingual Tibetan-Khas copperplate of Aditya Malla, dated AD 1321!

Stages of Cultural Annexation

An analysis of the river-names of the Valley—ancient as well as the modern ones—shows that there are three main stages of Sanskritisation of place-names. They are:

i. Approximation
ii. Translation
iii. Substitution

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9 Pant and Pant, 1979, p. 102.
10 Vajracarya et al, 1962, pp. 181-187.
11 Bista, 1982, p. 7.
12 Malla, 1981, pp. 5-26.

Approximation is the least aggressive linguistic process. When Bhacakhu is Sanskritised as Bhadramati, the process at work is approximation. Both phonetically and semantically the two names are not irreconcilable. But when Thabahil (the monastery in the upper part of town) becomes Thamel, the approximation is only phonetic, not semantic. It is somewhat like the 18th-19th-century European spelling 'Cat-man-do' for Kathmandu, from Skt. *Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa* (pavilion made of wood).

Translation is an intermediate process of cultural annexation. It takes place when the Newari *Nwakhu* (mouth-river; murmuring river) becomes Sanskrit *Vāgmatī*, or when *Tukhu* (sugarcane river) becomes Skt. *Ikṣumatī*, or more recently the Newari Hijakhusi becomes the Khas Dhobi Kholā. Translation is a cultural process which is possible only when two ethnic groups, each with a distinct linguistic and cultural system, have been in contact for sufficiently long period for the bilingual to thrive as a bridge over the two systems. When translation takes place from Language A to Language B, the latter would have already been enthroned as the code of the prestige group.

Substitution is the final, and in a sense the most desperate, attempt to come to grips with unpalatable cultural and linguistic realities. When *Khāsaṅkhu* becomes *Hanumati* or when *Balkhu* is converted into *Ratnāvatī* and *Hijākhu* had to be called *Rudramatiī*, something radical is taking place. This process takes place, presumably, when the older place-names are either not-too-pleasant reminders to the new elites or not-too-comprehensible to their cultivated ears. The 'rude', 'barbarous' and 'cacophonous' names slowly begin to give way to the cultured and graceful—*vatīs* and—*matīs*. Substitution is an assertive rather than assimilative process. It takes place, perhaps, when the displacement of the older strata of settlers is complete—politically as well as culturally.

An overwhelming number of older place-names of this ancient valley are increasingly submerged under the 'Nepalised' (as the German cartographers have so agreeably put it) substitutions. Many more of the less familiar place-names are receding into the world of oblivion with each passing generation. Place-names are as much a part of one's cultural heritage as personal surnames are of one's social history. Unless they are systematically rescued, recorded and studied by well-trained native speakers, one of the most valuable relics of our ethnolinguistic past is

likely to be buried forever under the burgeoning cultural debris, consisting of such drab coinages as Bangemudha, Pradarsani Marga, or, if you will, King's Way! The loser, in any case, will not be the linguist alone.

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18

The Profane Names of the Sacred Hillocks

In analysing and interpreting the non-Sanskrit words encountered in the Sanskrit inscriptions of ancient Nepal (AD 464-879), four interrelated hypotheses have provided the main conceptual framework in my work:[1]

i. The non-Sanskrit words in the running text of Sanskrit inscriptions provide valuable evidence for prehistoric tribal-Hindu ethnic contacts;
ii. Mostly, these words belong to the Tibeto-Burman languages, basically, to proto-Newari from which the present day Newari has developed;
iii. In the course of the Hindu political-cultural domination by the Licchavis (AD 464-879), the Thakuris (AD 880-1200), and the Mallas (AD 1201-1769), the tribals were Hinduised or Sanskritised; and
iv. In the process, different species of tribal toponyms were Sanskritised, including the name of the country itself.

In the present paper we present some more evidence in support of our hypotheses. We look at the names of the hillocks, this time. The hillocks, like the water sources, the rivers, and their confluences, are susceptible to veneration as sacred cult objects. The sanctification of the hillocks

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1 Malla, 1981; Malla, 1983a; and Malla, 1983b.

and mountains is a form of veneration of high places. Mountains have been considered a seat of gods in most religious mythologies of the world. Mount Tabor in Palestine, Mount Fuji in Japan, Wu Tai Shan—the five-peaked mountain in China, Mount Kailash in South Asia, Chomolungma—Mother Goddess of the Earth, and Mount Olympus in Greece are each held in reverence in myth and religion of the land. Some of them enjoy regular pilgrim traffic to, around, and up the mountain, especially to the summit. The mountain cult often leads to the construction of religious structures, either on mountains themselves as elevated sanctuaries, or on their feet, slopes, or in the immediate neighbourhood. The four most revered Vaiaṣṇva shrines of the Nepal Valley are all situated on the hillocks or on their feet. The most celebrated Buddhist shrine—Svayambhū—too is situated on a hillock. Because of such high religious-cultural potency of hillocks and mountains, their names are equally susceptible to linguistic and cultural annexation by organised and formal religions.

Most names of the hillocks in and around the Valley may have been just graphic or descriptive in origin, with little or no implications in terms of religious semantics. As evidence for this hypothesis we submit a list of 16 toponyms (in Appendix A)—all found in ancient Sanskrit inscriptions of the Nepal Valley and its environs, dated between AD 506-705. These toponyms have some common formal features. For example, *co*, *gum*, *gum-co* or *rhū-co* figure as the common morphemic finals in the nominal compounds. A Sanskrit-Newari lexicon, *Amarakośa* dated NS 501 / AD 1381, defines the Sanskrit word kuta / sikhara (peak) as *gum-co*. Some Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal have comparable cognates, e.g. Kaike has *chwang*, Khaling has *cong*, and Jirel has *cu-cog*. For hill or mountain, modern colloquial Tibetan has *ri*. All these data indicate that the 16 ancient toponyms are actually names of hillocks—forested or otherwise. Secondly, they are all nominal compounds of Tibeto-Burman roots / stems. Thirdly, they represent early forms of Newari. In support of these contentions, we submit a list of hillock names in modern Newari which clearly retain the roots / stems *co*, *gum*, or *gum-co*.

cāṅgu, icaṅgu, sāṁhagum, jāmāco (Nāgārjun), *phuco, theco, holco, chilaṅco, pākhāco, miguco, nātalāco, palākhaco* (Palāṅcok)

Our hypothesis that most non-Sanskrit toponyms in ancient inscriptions of Nepal are Tibeto-Burman and proto-Newari seems to have disturbed some historians of Nepal. For example, Regmi has recently written:

> Whether the non-Sanskritic names are of the Mongolian (sic) family of languages or they belonged to a different family? What is the standard by which to judge their character? The mere fact of familiarity and identity both in the positive and negative sense is not enough. One must judge them by the structural pattern and meaning of the linguistic form concerned. But here none of the words we have mentioned show characteristics of Mongoloid strain by structure of meaning.[2]

This categorical negative conclusion of the noted historian of Nepal is worth analysing for several reasons. In the first place, Regmi does not seem to be aware of the distinction between the two English words *Mongolian* (i.e., of Mongolia, a country in Asia) and *Mongoloid* (an anthropological abstraction, a racial type). Secondly, he is badly confused between Mongolian-Mongoloid (race) and Tibeto-Burman (language-family). Thirdly, he talks about 'Mongoloid strain' in structure or meaning, or about the structural pattern and meaning of the linguistic form concerned without identifying either, in any one of the nearly 250 non-Sanskrit words to be found in ancient inscriptions of Nepal. Finally, it was Regmi himself who, in a paper entitled 'The Antiquity of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley'—published in 1948 in the *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* Vol. xxxiv: pp. 49-59—wrote the following:

> We have definite linguistic and archaeological proofs for the existence of (the Newars) as early as the fifth century AD by a reference to the Newari names in the inscriptions, which are maintained intact up till today. The various names like *gum-vihara*, etc, are pure Newari derivatives. The language of inscriptions being Sanskrit, it may be inferred that Newari was thrown into background as up till now it is.[3]

Why the vintage Regmi suffered a volte-face since the publication of my papers is something that does not interest me.

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2 Regmi, 1983, p. 265.

3 Regmi, 1948, p. 49.

II

The second part of the paper is focussed on the Hindu-Buddhist annexation or transformation of the tribal Tibeto-Burman/Newari names of the two most sacred hillocks of the Valley. The most sacred Buddhist monument-site of the Valley is located on the hillock of Svayambhū, as it is so-called today. The hillock of Cāṅgu in the east is the most holy Vaiṣṇava monument-site in the Valley. In an inscription located in the site dated NS 492/AD 1372, the hillock of Svayambhū is called *Sā-mha-śikhara* (cow-body-hillock). *Sā-mha-gum* is also attested in the Sanskrit text of the famous 14th-century Nepalese chronicle—the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī*.[4] The loaded Sanskrit name *Padmācala-śikhara* occurs in an inscription dated NS 533/AD 1513, to be followed by Gośṛṅga and Gopuccha in other texts. The process of the transformation of the tribal Tibeto-Burman *Sā-mha-gum* (a hillock resembling a reclining body of the cow) into Padmācala, Gośṛṅga and Gopuccha is explained in a Buddhist text. In the *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, the earliest known dated version of NS 678/AD 1558 (folio 2b: lines 1-3, verses 49-52), the following explanation is offered:

> O Jinasri, Listen. There is a mountain called Gopuccha, situated in Nepal, along the northern Himalayas. With the passing of each aeon, the name of the mountain also underwent changes. In the Satya Yuga, it was called Padmagiri. In the Tretā Yuga, it was named Vajrakūṭa. In the Dvāpāra Yuga, it was known as Gośṛṅga. In the present Kali Yuga, it is called Gopuccha. The inhabitants of Nepal have their own name for it, and they call it Sā-mha-gum.

Clearly, the religious conception of the sequence of four ages has provided a handy framework to hold and justify each of the four names, assigning by implication the tribal name to the most inferior of the four ages, i.e., the Iron Age. This extract from the Buddhist text is a most powerful piece of evidence to show how the profane or mundane tribal toponyms are annexed and sanctified by the ideologues of organised and formal religions.

In many ways, the Buddhist text offers a far better explanation for the

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4 Vajācārya and Malla, 1985, folio 26b: line 2.

name of its monument-site than the Vaiṣṇava commentary on the hillock-name Cāṅgu (m). In the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī,* there is a curiously belaboured passage—doubtlessly an interpolation—which seeks to interpret the Vaiṣṇava hillock-name:

> śrī Viṣṇutīrthanārāyaṇa, founded initially by King Viṣṇugupta with the desire to conquer enemy's lands, is called Ye-Cāṅgum (Ye=south). Then Cāṅgum Narayana was founded because there was famine. Then there was affluence. This is called Yo- Cāṅgum (Yo=west). The Viṣṇunabya was founded to produce wealth (gold). There was a shower of gold among those who founded it. This is called Yan-Cāṅgum (Yan=north). Then śrī Cāṅgum Nārāyaṇa was founded by those longing for offspring. This is Wan-Cāṅgum (Wan=east). These four are called Cāṅgum.[5]

The chronicler gropes for a culturally convincing explanation for the hillock-name, but clearly fails to do so. In the very first historical document of Nepal, i.e., Mānadeva I's Cangu *adri,* Inscription, dated Saka 386/AD 464, the hillock is called Dolādri (Skt. *Dolā*=a swing, hammock; hillock, a swinging hillock, a hillock which looks like a hammock, or an unstable hillock). Vajācārya has offered a convincing interpretation of the Newari name for the hillock where he wrote:

> In Newari the name Cāṅgum means a hillock which looks like a swing.[6]

Here again Regmi writes a gloss of the word in which the second sentence contradicts the first one:

> How the name Changu came to be applied is not known. It is obviously a translation of Doladri, on which Narayana takes his abode. The dola, i.e., swinging is an act of Visnu in the rainy season for a seasonal frolic.[7]

However, later on in the same book, Regmi hastens to make a confessional remark. The last sentence, in particular, reminds us of *Nepāla Mahātmya* (II:3):

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5 Vajācārya and Malla, 1985, folio 30b: lines 1-3
6 Vajācārya, 1973, p. 19.
7 Regmi, 1983, p. 9.

The present name Cāṅgu is still obscure in meaning and all that we have said is just a guess work. I have found that my view agrees with that of Dhanavajra in interpreting the meaning of *Changu*. One meaning offered is that there was a forest of *Champaka* trees which the Newaris call *Chansin* (sic).[8]

III

A less colourful transformation of the tribal hillock names is exemplified by a classic in modern scientific cartography. In the most reliable maps of the Nepal Valley, all hillock-names have been 'Nepalised'—annexed to Nepali forms, so that all Tibeto-Burman *co*-s (hillock) have been conveniently converted into somewhat absurd Indo-Aryan *cok* (Skt. *catuskaūa*=square, a courtyard) (see Appendix B). A hillock known as *thenco* in AD 506-633 (TB, *then*=lower; co=peak) has been converted into Thankot (*than*=a place, after Skt. *sthāna*=guardroom, a police station, a military courtyard) after the rise of the Gorkhali military power in the 18th-19th century. Compared with such prosaic transformations of toponyms, the reincarnation of *sā-mha-gum* as svayambhu or as *padmācala* (lotus-hill) is nothing if not a metaphysical conceit.

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Appendix A

then-co	Saka 428/	AD 506	Thankot
hārā -gun	430/	508	Sitapaila
ardha-co	479	557	Pharping
khā -rhi-co			
brem-gum-co			
mo-gum-co			
mim-di-co			
pā-gum	M.S. 65	641	Sunakothi
gum-vihāra	32	608	Harigaon
(probably sā-mha-gum vihāra)			
cho-gum	?	?	ICāṅgum
pā-han-co	57	633	Thankot
lum-ban-co			

nha-gum	55	631	Balambu
kha-re-vāl -gan-co	103	679	Patan
go-mi-bhu-dhan-co			
dan-dan-gum	129	705	Balambu

Appendix B

The 'Nepalised Names' of the Hillocks

Dahacok
Jamacok
Khalcok
Dalincok
Ghumarcok
Halcok
Kiwācok
Nalincok
Pākhācok
Pulcok
Sāngācok
Talimcok
Tancok
Tasincok

(Source: *The Kathmandu Valley Maps*. Munich: Association for Alpine Research. 1977.)

Appendix C

Sanskritisation of the Tribal Place-names of the Valley

Lalitapaṭṭana	Yala
Bhaktapur	Khopa
Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa	Yam
Pasmakāṣṭhapuri	Kirtipur (Guṇḍe)
Champāpura	Wā -de
śivapuri	Bulhu
Svarṇachatrapuri	Lubhu
Amarāpuri	Buṅga

Sikharāpuri	Pharping
Dundupaṭṭana	Theco
Saṅkharapuri	Pāṅgā
Vijayāpuri	Lohakokha
Vanagiri	Puco
Satyapuri	Satungal
Hastināpuri	Kisipiri
Bhadrapuri	Syābajiga
Candrajyoti	Sāṅnkhu
Gośṛṅgapuri	Sāṅgā
Matsyanārāyanpuri	Naukvātha
Jitpuri	Khonā
Jyeṣṭhapuri/Harisiddhi	Jalha
Hārigoan	Narha
Devapaṭṭan	Gola
Suprabhāpuri	Thakvā
Bandepuri	Bhonta
Pu'yavati	Palanti/Panti
Vandanāpuri	Badegaú
Ratnapuri	Lele Lembāti
Hanumatpuri	Pula
Dolāgiri	Caṅgu
Narendrapuri	Okhata
Saṅkharapuri	Saṅko
Pāṇḍupuri	Pamdu
Chandanagiri	Cilaúco
Jayapur	Nakadeśa
Dharmapur	Boḍe
Madhyapur	Thimi
Varuṇapur	Katuúje

(Source: *Himavatkhaṇḍa* (Varanasi: Yogapracarini, V.S. 2013) Appendix: Old Names, p. 151.)

19

Nepāla: Archaeology of the Word

Antiquity of the Word

The word *Nepāla* is obscure in origin. The earliest reliable incidence of the word is in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (AD 335-375). The undated inscription mentions that among other frontier-kings, the king of Nepāla 'paid tribute, obeyed orders, and came to prostate themselves to satisfy the proud will of the master'. In Nepalese sources, the earliest incidence of the word is in an inscription dated equivalent to AD 512. Issued by King Vasantadeva, it is located in Tistung, a small valley at the foot of Candrāgiri, on the ancient entry route to the Nepal Valley. The form used in the inscription is *svasti naipālevyaḥ*, translated by the authorities variously as '(greetings) to Nepalis', '(greetings) to the residents of Nepal', '(greetings) to the Nepālas', and '(greetings) to the leaders/kings of Nepālas'. The form *naipālevyaḥ* is dative plural. *Naipāla* is from *Nepāla*, combined with the suffix -an. The vowel *e* in the first syllable *ne* becomes the dipthong *ai* when the suffix *-a* is used. Unfortunately, however, the suffix *-a* is used for different shades of meaning, coming for, among other things, attributives (e.g., *śaiva* from *śiva*), aggregates (e.g. *bhaikṣam* from *bhikkṣu*), and patronymics (e.g. *aupagava* | from *upagu)*. It may sometimes bear the sense of 'king/leader of' as in *śaibhyaḥ*, 'king of śibis'.

Although the exact shade of meaning of the form of address *svasti naipālevyaḥ* is debatable, two facts of its use are in clear evidence. Of the nearly 200 extant ancient Nepalese inscriptions belonging to the 5th to 9th century AD, the form of address is used in only three inscriptions.

Although they are chronologically nearly a century apart, they are all located in the Tistung valley. Two of these, issued 95 years apart, are located exactly in the same find-spot. The total absence of the form of address in the rest of ancient inscriptions, on the one hand, and the evident concentration of it within a limited geographic area, on the other, compel us to reject the translation of *naipālevyaḥ* as 'to the Nepalis in general'. It can only mean either 'to the Nepāla-s' or 'to the leaders/ kings of the Nepāla-s'. If this interpretation of epigraphic facts is sound, the word Nepāla stood, in the past, for a well-defined and specific social aggregate whose identity was intact till the beginning of the 7th century AD. The use of the form of address coincides with a phase in ancient Nepalese political history when the Abhira clan was in evident ascendency (AD 512-640).

The Word 'Nepāla' in Literary Sources

Nepāla is, of course, not a rare word in classical Indian literature. It occurs in an alleged Vedic text, *Atharvapariśiṣṭa*. It occurs in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, in Bharata *Natyśaāstra*, in some recensions of the *Mahābhārata*, in the Buddhist canonical text, *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, and the Jaina text, *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*. However, the main problem with these literary sources is that they do not have any firm, reliable and absolute chronology. For example, some authorities claim that *Arthaśāstra b*elongs to the 4th century BC while others would not date it earlier than the 4th century AD! The critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* does not contain any reference to Nepal, but a southern recension does have a reference. Textual studies of these classics have shown that they belong to 'evolving anonymous literature' and that there are far too many interpolations and scribal 'improvements' for anyone to be able to decide what constituted the 'original text'. Thus, although the name *Nepāla* appears in Indian literary sources, most of these are so difficult to date with any exactitude that these sources are not of much use in establishing either the origin or the antiquity of the word.

Traditional Interpretations of the Word

In Nepal, there are two kinds of historical writings available in the traditional genre: the mediaeval *vaṃśāvalīs* (the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, compiled in ca. the 1380s, and its cognates) and the vernacular chronicles (compiled between the 1820s and 1880s). One of the most important

differences between the two traditions is that whereas the mediaeval chronicles are relatively free from mythological digressions and puranic materials, the later chronicles are infested with them. It is interesting to note that the traditional interpretation of the word *Nepāla* is not preserved in any of the three surviving mediaeval chronicles whereas the later chronicles, both Brahmanical and Buddhist versions, contain interpretations and rationalisations of the word *Nepāla*. In one version, it is said that 'the great Rishi, from whom Nepal derives its name, was a devotee named Ne'.[1] In the same chronicle, we also come across the following story:

> The cowherds who came in the train of Lord Krishna settled down...and built cowsheds. One of their cows, by name Ne, was a milch cow, but gave no milk. Every day at a certain time she went running to a certain place. One day the chief cowherd followed her, and saw milk issuing from her udder, and saturating the spot on which she stood. His curiosity was excited to know what was under the spot, and on removing some earth he discovered the light, which however consumed him.
>
> Ne Muni, from whom Nepal derives its name, then came, and having persuaded the people that there would be no Chhetri Rajas in the Kali Yuga, he installed as king the son of the cowherd who had been consumed by the light.[2]

The Buddhist interpretation, however, is quite different. According to a recension, compiled in ca. AD 1825, Maújuśrī Bodhisattva, the divine agent who drained the primordial Lake of Serpents, Nāgahrda, that was the Nepal Valley, persuaded the serpent-king Karkoṭaka to stay on in the drained valley:

> In order that the city may be well populated, you will have to cause the rains to be set in here always in due season and cherish the people; and the Self-Existent Buddha called Ne, (i.e. the sender to paradise) will also take care and multiply the community. The Valley will be called after his name Nepal or the Cherished of the Adi Buddha.[3]

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1 Wright, 1877, p. 89.
2 Wright, 1877, pp. 107-108.
3 Hasrat, 1970, p. 7.

In these traditions, two elements emerge clearly into relief. The imputed etyma (Ne the sage, Ne the cow, and Ne the sender to paradise) are primarily sectarian in nature, and the interpretations are drawn from a given religious-cultural system so that the name could be, not only interpreted, but also legitimatised within the system. The word, thus, becomes not just a linguistic sign, but also a cultural syndrome.

Chronologically, what is of critical interest here is that although the story of the milch cow was not unknown to the mediaeval chroniclers, Ne Muni or Ne the sender to paradise, was not known to them. The compilers of *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* were familiar with the tradition relating to Nepa the cowherd who dug out the Jyotirliṅga or the Luminous Phallus of Lord Paśupati. Prior to the late 15th century, Ne Muni did not seem to exist at all. Gajapati, a mediocre Sanskrit playwright, who composed a Sanskrit play called *Caturāṅka Mahābhārata* (preserved in the National Archives, Kathmandu, Catalogue Part I, No. 449), wrote in the preface that 'the country protected in the past by Ne Muni is called Nepāla'. This is the only known and reliable ancestry of the sage Ne Muni.

In the Nepal Valley, during the 15th-16th centuries, there appears to have been an upsurge of religious-cultural nationalism. *Nepāla Mahātmya* (earliest extant copy dated AD 1654), *Svayambū Purāṇa* (earliest extant copy dated AD 1558), *Paśupati Purāṇa* (earliest extant copy dated AD 1504), and similar puranic texts were compiled. This literature appears to have grown, at least in part, out of the cultural need to glorify and legitimatise the local shrines, including the rivers and their confluences, by some or other kind of divine association. Initially, the inspiration may have come from the recent migrant religious and cultural elites from India. There is hardly any doubt that sectarian and religious interpretation of the word *Nepāla* was sought during this fertile period of myth-making. Ne the sender to paradise and Ne the sage may have been pious afterthoughts of this phase in Nepal's cultural history.

First Approaches to Secular Analysis

The earliest known secular (i.e., linguistic) attempt to analyse and interpret the word Nepāla was made by Christian Lassen (1800-1876), a Norwegian scholar who spent most of his working life as Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Bonn, Germany. The four volumes of his *Indische Alterthumskunde* (Indian Archaeology), published between 1847-

1861, are regarded by the knowledgeable as 'a milestone in the progress of the science of Indology', and 'one of the world's greatest monuments of untiring industry and critical scholarship'. In volume I fascicle 2, Lassen writes that *Nepāla*, like *Himāla*, *Paúcāla*, and similar other words, is formed as a compound of nipa and *āla* (standing for *ālaya*, i.e., abode). *Nīpa* is 'foot of a mountain'. *Nepāla* thus means 'abode at the foot of a mountain'.[4] In the meantime, Lassen dismissed Ne Muni as 'just a concoction'.

At the beginning of the present century, Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935), a French savant of great repute and vast erudition in the Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan languages, published a monumental three-volume study on the history and culture of Nepal, *Le Népal: étude historique d'un royaume hindou*. He begins his survey of the history of Nepal with a lucid and critical examination of the earliest references to Nepal, both epigraphic and literary, including the legendary interpretations of the word. In this context, Lévi also scrutinises Lassen's etymological explanation:

> Even supposing that the change from *nīpa* to *nepa* were legitimate, the sense attributed here to this word [i.e., foot of a mountain—KPM] would have no other foundation than the gloss of a scholiast [i.e., a 16th-century commentator called Mahīdhara, in his commentary on *Vājaśayeni Saṃhitā*—KPM]. Moreover, it applies rather badly to a country already situated in the mountains themselves. Nepal strictly speaking is only the large interior valley. The word nīpa signifies above all a kind of aśoka (the *nauclea cadamba* of the botanist) which is far from being characteristic of the Nepalese region. In addition, one could still bring in the Nīpas, a princely race of the cycle of the Pāṇḍavas, who reigned in Kāmpilya in Pāúcāla.[5]

Lévi not only found Lassen's Sanskrit etymology of the word *Nepāla* untenable, he went on to confess:

> The name Nepal, *Nepāla*, despite its Sanskrit appearance, does not lend itself to a satisfactory etymological explanation.[6]

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4 Lassen, 1861, p. 76, footnote no 3.
5 Lévi, 1905, II, p. 66.
6 Lévi, 1905, II, p. 66.

Despite his vast Sanskirtit learning, Lévi himself had no definite contribution to make, except a suggestive hint where he said:

> Either newara derives its origin from the word *Nepāla*, or that Nepal owes, on the contrary, her name to a Sanskrit adaptation of local ethnic.[7]

Sir Ralph L. Turner, in his famous *Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* reinstates Lévi's suggestion in his entry in the dictionary under the head-word Nepāla, where he writes:

> Late Sanskrit, *Nepāla* singular, the country; plural, its people; —this may be a sanskritization of *newār*, or the latter may be a later (Eastern Hindi or Bihari) form of *Nepāla*.[8]

Tibetan Etymology: The Miscarried Attempt

Austin L. Waddell, a British civil servant turned Tibetologist, proposed an etymology of the word Nepāla based on what he thought were Tibetan data.[9] According to him, the first syllable *ne* (corresponding to the written Tibetan form *gnas*) signifies home, spot, sacred place, or place of pilgrimage. The syllable *pal* would be the equivalent of *bal*, signifying 'wool'. *Nepāla* would then signify 'the sacred place of the bal or wool'. Waddell's monstrous etymological explanation has no basis in facts of the Tibetan language or Tibeto-Burman linguistics. For one thing, the usual word order is *Bal-po, Bal-yul*. So, instead of *gnas-bal*, it would ordinarily be *bal-gnas*. Secondly, the Tibetan name for Newars *(Bal-po)* and Nepal *(Bal-yul)*, as Tucci has conclusively shown, is due to 'curious duplications of place names'. In the AD 821 Treaty Inscription at Lhasa, Nepal is clearly referred to as *gcen lho Bal pho*.[10]

Indo-Aryan Etymologies: The Topographic Interpretations

Topographic features of Nepal in general and the Nepal Valley in particular have remained the bases of Indo-Aryan interpretations of the word so far. These interpretations have several problems—the problems

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7 Lévi, 1905, I, pp. 222-223.
8 Turner, 1931, p. 353.
9 Waddell, 1893, pp. 292-294.
10 Tucci, 1958, pp. 344-347, 397.

of imputed meaning as well as the problems of rules of word formation. Robert Shafer, an American linguist who was basically a Sino-Tibetanist rather than an Indologist, says:

> The first part of *Nepāla* is phonetically quite regular as a derivative of *nīpa* (foot of a mountain). Sanskrit *ai*, as a rule, became Prakrit *e*.

Then Shafer goes on to add:

> But I do not believe we can consider *Nepāla* in isolation when discussing the last part of the word. At least some of these final-*la*'s [in *Pāúcāla, Nepāla, Kośala, Bańgāla*—KPM] found in place names may have been Tibeto-Burmic in origin.[11]

Whereas Shafer was bothered by the last part of the word Nepāla, offering to explain the word as Indo-Aryan in root and Tibeto-Burman in suffix, a different problem in Indo-Aryan explanation bothered John Burton-Page, a British expert on South Asian archaeology. He interprets the word as a derivative of *nīpa* (damp, low-lying), affixed with *āla*, the old Indo-Aryan suffix meaning 'pertaining to, possessing'. This would result in *naipala*. So, he says:

> The real difficulty from the Sanskrit viewpoint is the *guna*-vowel; the *vrddhi ai* would be expected in the Sanskrit derivative of *nīpa-āla*.

To get over this difficulty Burton-Page proposes to interpret the word *Nepāla* in a somewhat tortuous way: *Nepāla* is a 're-sanskritisation of Prakrit *nevāla* which is derived from Sanskrit *naipāla* which in turn is a derivative of the root *nīpa* suffixed with *āla*'.[12] According to him, the meaning of this compound will be 'damp, low-lying home'. To call Nepal in general or the Nepal Valley in particular 'damp, low-lying home' may be an unsatisfactory metaphor, but not a very apt toponym. We are, therefore, relieved at the fact that Burton-Page concedes that 'this is not offered as a conclusive solution'. Because,

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11 Shafer, 1954, p. 137.
12 Burton-Page, 1954, p. 596.

while the interpretation may be sound phonetics, its semantics is questionable.

Recently, Nepali historian D.R. Regmi has come up so late in the day with yet another Indo-Aryan etymology based on topographic semantics. According to Regmi:

> Nepāla might have derived its name from *nipa* [note that the vowel *i* short in Regmi, whereas it has always been long earlier—KPM], meaning as it goes to cause, to imbibe as a verb or a water jar or a lake as a noun. By *vrddhi* it becomes *Naipa*. *Nipa* obviously means a tank or a lake in the present context...[The settlers] gave it the name according to its potential supporting capacity to be associated with *palayati* and lastly the name *Nepāla* came to birth.[13]

A careful perusal of a Sanskrit dictionary or dictionaries would immediately expose how disastrous this etymology is. In his dictionary, Regmi just looked at the head-word at the top of the column, ignoring the other elements of the compounds. *Nīpa* is, of course, a water jar. But it does not mean a lake. The word which stands for 'a well, pool, tank, any place or trough for watering cattle', is not *nipa*, but *nipana*. Similarly, *nipasaras* is 'a pool or lake for watering cattle'. How the most unlikely compounding of *naipa+pālayati* will result in *Nepāla* by any rule of Sanskrit morphophonemics, unfortunately, the Nepali historian does not care to explain.

Sanskritisation

Scholarly Sanskrit dictionaries—the native Indian dictionaries, the great St. *Petersburg Dictionary* of Bohtlingk and Roth, and Mayerhofer's recent etymological dictionary—all appear to have maintained a studied but intriguing silence about the origins of the word *Nepāla*. Two of the greatest Indo-Aryanists of the twentieth century, the late Sir Ralph L. Turner of Britain and the late Suniti Kumar Chatterjee of India, have both indicated that the word may have been a sanskritisation of *Newāra*. As we have shown earlier, Lévi, too, hinted at the possibility of the word being a Sanskrit *adaptation of de l'ethinique local*. Despite his Indo-Aryan leanings, Burton-Page concedes that *Nepāla* is a sanskrit form of *Nevāla* (Prakrit).

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13 Regmi, 1983, p. 1.

Baburam Acarya, the late Historian-Laureate of Nepal, at first proposed to interpret *Nepāla* as a sanskritisation of a tribal name which he hypothesised as *Nepāra*. Later on, he, too, came round to accept that *Nepāla* is a sanskritisation of *Newāra*.[14]

Recently, the sanskritisation hypothesis has gained some additional evidence. A great many place-names traced in ancient Nepalese inscriptions—the names of rivers, hillocks, fields, canals, etc, are non-Sanskritic in origins. Recent analyses have shown that many of these toponyms and hydronyms are, in fact, Tibeto-Burman in stock.[15] An analysis of ancient river-names and their recent transformations has nearly conclusively established that several names are sanskritisation of Tibeto-Burman words and roots.

Lévi, Turner, Chatterjee, Burton-Page, and Acarya are all unanimous on the point that *Nepāla* is a sanskritisation of *Newāra*. However, it will be closer to the known linguistic/phonetic facts of the two words (*Nepāla/Nebāla/Newāla/Newāra*) if we consider them as two phonetically variant forms of the same word: *Nepāla* is the learned Sanskrit form whereas *Newāra* is the colloquial Prakrit form. The earliest verifiable incidence of Prakrit form of the word *(naivāla)* is attested in the Gilgit manuscript of the Buddhist canonical text *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinayavastu* by Jinamitra compiled 'after the 3rd century AD'.[16] It was translated into Chinese by I-tsing in AD 700.

Tibeto-Burman Roots?: An Ethnolinguistic Hypothesis

Classical place-names in South Asia have almost always been the names of the tribes, clans, and peoples who had been inhabiting the place, e.g., *Bhārata* (from the *Bharatas), Pāñcāla, Magadha, Videha, Andhra, Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kalliṅga, Matsya, Kuru, Puṇḍra*, etc. At least, in one classical Indian text, Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* (XIII: 32), usually dated back to second century AD, the people of Nepal *(naipālika)* is mentioned along with other well-known tribes—Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Vatsa, Odra, Magadha, Puṇḍra, etc. The epigraphic evidence in Nepal also indicates that the country probably got its name from the people who inhabited it, rather than from any of its isolated topographical feature—real or imagined.

To say that *Nepāla* is a sanskritisation of *Newāra* does not explain much

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14 Acarya, 1953 and 1972.
15 Malla, 1981 and 1983.
16 Lévi, 1907, p. 115.

in etymological terms. The crux of the problem is to identify and define, if possible, the semantic primitives, i.e., the basic roots of which the original word is made. Local traditions and interpretations consistently retain a kind of unconscious echo of certain roots: *ne*, the cow; *Nepa*, the cowherd; *Ne-muni*, the sage; and *Ne*, the sender to paradise. Of these, the earliest tradition is of *Nepa* the cow-herd, the eponymic ancestor of the clan of Abhiras who migrated to Nepal. This tradition is recorded in *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*. Although the chronicle was compiled in ca. the AD 1380s, the compilers had drawn upon sources which went back at least to the AD 1050s. Māṇikya Vardhana, a courtpoet of Sthitimalla's time (AD 1382-1395) also mentions Nepa the cowherd as the founder of the Abhiras.

Local traditions are nearly unanimous on the point that prior to the arrival of the Hindu dynasty of the Licchavis in early centuries AD/BC, the early settlers of the Nepal Valley were herdsmen, cowherds (*gopāla-s*) and buffalo-herds (*mahiṣapāla-s*). *Ne* is cattle, cow, buffalo in some Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal and *pa* is a suffix for man, very widespread in the Tibeto-Burman area. On the basis of these scanty linguistic and ethno-historical evidence, some tentative hypotheses may be hazarded:

a. *nepa* is a Tibeto-Burman stem consisting of the roots *ne* (cow, buffalo, cattle) and *pa* (man, keeper);
b. *nepa* was sanskritised as *Nepāla/nevāla*, possibly on the analogy of *gopāla* (cowherd). Tibeto-Burman *pa* can elegantly be transformed into Indo-Aryan *pāala/vāla* (keeper).

The later Hindu-Buddhist puranas and chronicles may have found the idea of a cowherd as the eponymic ancestor of the country somewhat unpalatable to their religious and cultured taste. Nepa the cowherd was conveniently metamorphosed into Ne the sage or Adi Buddha—the sender to paradise! The original meaning was lost and forgotten in the process of sanskritisation and linguistic acculturation.

In conclusion, one can only quote what the late Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the National Professor in the Humanities and perhaps twentieth-century India's leading Indo-Aryan scholar, had to say on the word *Nepāla*:

> Various derivations of the name Nepal *(Nepāla)* were proposed by the Pandits of Nepal in medieval times, both Buddhist and Brahman. It

would appear, however, that the name came from that of a Tibeto-Burman speaking tribe, the ancestors of the present-day Newar people, and consists of two elements—a prefix Ne-, of uncertain meaning (it may be the name of some hero-king or priest among the tribe) and the proper tribal name *Pal* or *Bal*—the meaning of which in Newari is lost.[17]

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17 Chatterjee, 1974, p. 64.

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VI

Archaeology and Historiography

20

The Limits of Surface Archaeology

Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley by Mary Shepherd Slusser; Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982; Volume I: pp. xix+491+appendixes+bibliography and index; Volume II: 3-Colour Maps 9, figures, black-and-white plates 600; Rs 2379.

Book on the arts, architecture, and culture of the Nepal Valley are now not so rare as they were in the past. Most of them, however, cater to the needs of the lay reader or the visitor. Mary Slusser's book is an exception. It has two clear merits—it is not a guide book nor is it a conventional art history. Secondly, it is love's labour—unlikely to be lost, or even replaced in the foreseeable future. Although she is not a trained 'Indologist' (she did her doctoral work on South American archaeology), her background as art-historian, archaeologist, and anthropologist has been an invaluable asset, and nothing could have been more desirable in a student of the culture of the Nepal Valley.

The book grew out of Slusser's long sojourn and her holy curiosity leading to fruitful and catalytic contacts with native culture and scholarship. Although Slusser was in Nepal between 1965 and 1971 only, the book is a product of years of indefatigable industry, meticulous study and research. As such, it deserves to be discussed in some detail. The subject-matter too is complex and intimidating—a culture system that evolved in the course of two millennia of symbiosis that took place within the geographical confines of the Nepal Valley.

When Slusser first came to Nepal in 1965, she wanted to read about

its culture. Her American colleagues knew the most famous Buddhist monument of the Valley merely as 'the Monkey Temple' whereas her Nepali friends could only let her know that it was 'old'. Because she could not find any satisfactory answer to her curiosity in the monuments that crowd the Valley, she came to write the book she did. After doing two years' unremitting field work, Slusser had enough materials 'to write a serious guide to the Kathmandu Valley cities and their compelling monuments'. However, by the time her 'serious guide book' was complete, she made a 'startling discovery—at once exciting and sobering'.

The King Solomon's Mines that Slusser bumped into were the Nepali-language publications—the work of native scholars, mainly the output of Itihāsa Saṃśodhana Maṇḍala. They provided her with the clues of a firm chronology—a clue to the jigsaw puzzle of the culture.

> From the Nepali sources I could now see that from AD 300 to 1769 there was an unbroken political continuum that harmonised with what was clearly an unbroken cultural continuum. (p. xiii)

Slusser's study seems to have, thus, two main hypotheses:

i. the cultural continuum harmonised with the political continuum;
ii. the cultural continuum was, in fact, unbroken from AD 300 to 1769.

Keeping these hypotheses in view, 'my primary aim', says Slusser, 'has been to render in broad outlines as cogent and comprehensive a history of Nepalese culture as is now possible within the limitations of one book' (p. xiv). Dividing her time between field work, Nepali language study and research—'in comprehending the sources' (p. xii), Slusser devoted well over a decade in writing the book. In her industry, she was fortunate to win the support, constant assistance, and geniality of 'the impeccable historians of the Saṃśodhana Maṇḍala'. Slusser's book is, thus, an exceptional monument to the cross-fertilising impact of the two traditions of scholarship—the Eastern and the Western. Without her 'accidental' contact with native research and scholarship, Slusser would have ended up with yet another glossy though, of course, 'serious guide to the Kathmandu Valley'.

Much of the groundwork—'the pieces unevaluated and

uninterpreted'—for the book come from the published sources—both Nepali and Western. Slusser's achievement lies in providing the elegant structure that one needs 'to make the cultural materials understandable'. Both her assimilation of 'the pieces' as well as her mastery of structure is in clear evidence in the early chapters of the book. In 61 odd pages (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), Slusser has given us one of the clearest outlines of Nepalese history available in any language. With exceptional clarity and conciseness she builds up her main themes in these chapters—the evolution and continuity of the culture system, its dovetailing with the continuity of the Nepalese monarchy, artificially divided into the House of Licchavis, the House of Thakuris, and the House of the Mallas. The political and cultural milieux, on the one hand, and the foreign contacts of Nepal during each of these periods, on the other, evidently show increasing Hinduisation of both polity and culture by successive dynasties.

As the mortal *dramatis personae*—as the patrons and creators of a complex culture—the Licchavis, the Thakuris, and the Mallas—in short, the Newar political and cultural elites were a pious, credulous and a somewhat addicted breed. The external stimulus for the growth of the culture has come almost continuously from India, and intermittently from contacts with the North. As noted by most observers on Newar culture, Slusser, too, finds that

> Newar settlements have an urban character that persists even in the smallest villages.

Her explanation for this urbanity of Newar culture is that 'the Newar towns and villages are generally oriented towards the river and the streams that course through the more level Valley floor' (p. 83). This is at best an adequate description, but not a convincing explanation. One possible explanation may be the early discovery of the art of brick- and tile-making—a crucial technology without which urban growth is inconceivable. The Newars appear to have known it for a full two millennia. Among the 'surface fragmentary remains' of Newar culture nothing is perhaps more important than the massive bricks that form the bedrock of its culture and urbanity. Another possible explanation for the growth of compact settlements and consequent socio-cultural syndromes is the Newar obligation to stay within the ritual and social

space defined in terms of patrilocal and patrilineal boundaries with Maṇḍala and bahis, nanis and āgams, degu-dyo and pālā-dyos as their radius. This cultural phenomenon is maintained largely through such instruments of social control and government as the guthi, rites, rituals, and, of course, a crowded calendar of communal festivals in familial as well a public sanctuaries. Despite Slusser's concentration on cities, courts, capitals, communities, and settlements, the amount of space and attention devoted to these instruments of cultural identity, maintenance and solidarity is scanty and dispersed. One wonders if Newar addiction to ritualism falls within Slusser's formula of 'the cultural history'.

Part II of *Nepal Mandala*, consisting of four chapters, 4-9, on Settlements and Structures, comprises the core of Slusser's book. This is also the most exciting and controversial part of the book, laced with 'delicately engineered reconstructions—both debatable and subjective'. Nowhere are the limits of 'surface archaeology' in greater evidence than in these chapters. Her credentials as an archaeologist notwithstanding, Slusser has done no digging in any site, at least not in broad daylight. It is, of course, not her fault that archaeology is a taboo word in the Nepal Valley. To dig is to invite divine as well as human wrath—almost as good as digging one's own grave. Slusser's concentration on architecture is puzzling, not because she herself has done no digging, but because

a. no building has survived in the Valley which is datable earlier than the 12th-13th century AD;
b. for the most part, present superstructures represent continuous restorations, following too frequent fires, earthquakes, and other tolls of time;
c. even the locations of the Licchavi capitals and well-documented palaces such as Mānagṛha, Kailāśakūṭabhavana, and Bhadrādhivāsa are matters of wild conjecture.

This leaves not much room for a serious and well-documented architectural history. Yet Slusser's certitude is intoxicating and infectious:

> We know, therefore, that in architecture, as in so many other aspects of Valley culture, there was an unbroken continuum. (p. 127)

Her data and arguments are tenuous and fragmentary, laced with her favorite expression 'almost certainly', an odd turn of phrase for a trained archaeologist to use so lavishly all over the text. At several places, she is neither here nor there. To cite a classic example,

> But even so, some escape dating altogether, such as the Svayambhū Caitya (Plate 274), which seems almost certainly to be very early, but which, as Pal discusses, may in fact be late. (p. 174)

On the basis of the extant physical remains, the surviving monuments and documentary references, Slusser attempts to reconstruct 'a certain understanding of early Nepali architecture'. Comparing their elements and structures, their idiom and style with the known successors of the Malla period as well as with contemporary architecture of ancient India, she arrives at interesting, but not unforeseen, conclusions:

> I believe Nepali architecture (is) firmly rooted in India, particularly the Gupta, and even Kuṣāṇa tradition, an assessment now tempered by the study of Ulrich Wiesner (1978), in which the Indian source, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta, of the Newar style temple is convincingly demonstrated. (p. 186 and footnote 109)

The alleged formality of Newar town planning is investigated in the section on life histories of five communities (pp. 86-106). Conscious planning, according to Slusser, 'is quite possible' because of the Newar familiarity with Vāstuvidyā. At the same time, she appears to think that, like fortifications and walling around the city, the conscious attempt to bring the socio-religious structures of the towns in conformance with the Vāstuśāstras may have been 'a recent veneer'—'accelerated under the orthodoxy of Sthiti Malla and his successors' (p. 94). Recent researches of Kolver and Gustchow on Bhaktapur, Patan and Kathmandu seem to show that these cities were ritually and socially defined spaces divided into the sacred and the profane areas with well-defined routes for gods and men, for the living and the dead, including the commemoration of the dead. Slusser's feeling, however, is that

> the splendor of the Newar town design seems to emanate more from an innate sense of aesthetics, a natural rhythmic articulation achieved

> over a long time span than a conscious organisation of space according to dictate. (p. 94)

Slusser's quest for the Licchavi period capital, particularly Aṃśuvarman's palace Kailāsśakūtabhavana, is an exciting piece of detective writing, except that she makes the same 'egregious error of place-identification' scholars so often tend to make. Her identification of the palace site with Kelāchem Chowk in Jaisi Deval is a classic example of an excellent methodology on a false trail. Kelāy Chowk is a small domestic courtyard surrounded by ordinary houses. Next to the courtyard is a minor shrine dedicated to Sithi-dyo (Kārttikeya)— usually a guardian deity on palace ramparts. Little bands of Thasi and Balambū villagers come to pay their annual pilgrimage to this shrine containing a Malla period polychrome painted wood image—believed to have been stolen from Balambū Village. The most powerful scent was thrown on this false trail by two mid-14th century colophons, containing a reference to 'Udayasimhadeva the nobleman descended from the dynasty of Kailāsśakūta in the district of Yaṅgala' (southern half of Kathmandu). Notwithstanding the anthropological concept of field work Slusser was 'committed to teach her assistants'—impeccable historians, on their own right—the fatal and illogical leap was taken when the colophons were interpreted as if Kailāsśakūṭabhavana was in Yaṅgala. The colophons certainly do not say so. Recently, on the basis of a careful analysis of the place-names and directions mentioned in the undated Nārāyaṇa Caur, Nāxal inscription of Jayadeva II, Michael Witzel has convincingly shown that the most likely site of Kailāśakūṭabhavana is around Taṅgāla—the find-spot of large brick walls built of bricks inscribed with the legend śrī mahāsāmantaṃśuvarmaṇaḥ. If Aṃśuvarman's palace-site is in Taṅgāla, to look for it in Yaṅgala with such seriousness is yet another distressing evidence of the limits of surface archaeology.

The third part of the book is an analysis of the Newar pantheon, its source and transformation. It consists of four chapters—Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12. Although Slusser confesses

> the understanding of Nepalese religion depends on a multiplicity of approaches and methods, flexible and varied to suit the material. (p. 222)

The main data in this part of the book come from the monuments—sculptures, primarily, and bronzes and paintings, marginally. The cultural process at work in the Nepal Valley is more clearly outlined in these chapters than in the second part of the book. Here, Slusser did not have to plod through 'delicate reconstructions': the sculptures speak eloquently of her continuum hypothesis.

The Newar pantheon is dominated by two formal systems, Hinduism and Buddhism, syncretically fused by Hindu Sākta cults and Buddhist tantrism. Underlying both the formal systems is the third stratum of indigenous elements and belief consisting of the nature gods, particularly such deities invested in trees and stones, birds and serpents, various animals, mountains and fire, and especially water. Their shrines are hypaetheral and the cult objects are often aniconic. Central to the Newar mode of worship is the emphasis placed upon the supremacy of the female principle which, according to Slusser, 'is but a reassertion of much older cults of the Mother Goddesses that prevailed in Nepal from at least Neolithic times' (p. 215).

The cultural process at work is primarily one of annexation and inclusion: the formal systems taking over the informal ones, the primordial cults taken over by the imported pantheon and iconography, often one grafted onto the other. But, more often, it is also the other way round—the Indian gods are transformed unrecognisably in the process of localisation. The changing fortunes of Kārttikeya—so popular in Licchavi Nepal—inexplicably overtaken by the relatively late-coming, inelegant, populistic Gaṇeśa, the transformation of Naṭeśvara as a guardian deity, the cult of Bhīmsena as a god of trade, and, of course, Indra as a pilloried though adorable thief—are only a few cases in point.

Undoubtely, Slusser is right in suggesting that

> Brahmanism in the Kathmandu Valley does not seem to be sufficiently different from that of India to merit particular attention. But the local aspects of Nepalese Buddhism, together with its evolution and dissolution over the years, demand just that. (p. 222)

This promise, however, remains unfulfilled in Slusser's treatment of Newar Buddhism (Chapter 10). The underlying reasons for the dissolution of Buddhism, including the secularisation of the too-numerous vihāras of the Valley, are neither convincingly analysed

nor documented. The apparent chronological order—the Licchavi, the Transitional, the Malla, and the Contemporary Scene—in which the chapter is organised is somewhat deceptively neat. Slusser makes sweeping statements without producing any evidence to support them. 'Buddhism appears to have reached its zenith during the Transitional Period' (p. 281), 'All (that) has transpired to efface Buddhism in Malla Nepal' (p. 290), 'decline and virtual dissolution of Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley' began to set in by the end of the 12th century (p. 286). If Buddhism can be interpreted as a system of ethics concerned with personal salvation, the means sought for such an end has been different in succeeding phases in the evolution of the doctrine. There is no dearth of evidence (Tibetan sources, for instance) to show that literary-intellectual as well as artistic-creative activities inspired by Buddhist faith continued till the rise of the three city-states in the Nepal Valley. Slusser appears to use sculpture or monuments as a standard of measurement of the vigour of the doctrine. There may not necessarily be such a correlation because the creative energies of a society may find different medium in different phases of its history. The Buddhist bronzes and paintings of the Malla period may indicate a change of taste, but not necessarily a complete dissolution of quality. Nor were all the late Buddhist cult objects 'made for the Newar traders by Tibetans with stock inscriptions in Newari', 'purely Tibetan replete with Central Asiatic and Chinese influences' (p. 289). To give just one telling example, the 19th-century Bilampau (narative scroll) of Viśwantara Jātaka at the Berlin Museum of Indian Art shows that the standard of Buddhist art was maintained by Newar painters till so late in the day. The astonishing overgeneralisations are somewhat out of place in a book so well-documented and meticulously researched.

The last two chapters of the book make unforgettable reading. They deal with what Slusser calls 'ancient indigenous root divinities of the Valley'. What characterises their cults is their informalism, their ambivalence, and above all their prime importance in the worship of the Newars. Central among these cults are the cults of the Mother Goddesses (the ajimā worship). More often than not, the imported 'formal' goddesses have been grafted onto root/folk/indigenous goddesses. For example,

> Maiti Devi is almost certainly a riverine māi or ajimā, fundamentally

> auchthonic divinity who long predated both Mahāmāmāyūrī (Vajrayāna) and Kaumārī (Hindu-Sakti). (p. 336)

Here, then, is a prototypical case—a riverine goddess of indigenous origins was transformed into Mahāmāyūrī—a Buddhist Vajrayāna goddess. She was later on annexed into the Hindu Sakti pantheon of Aṣṭamātrikā cults as a Kaumārī. A number of analyses in these chapters show that the substratum of Newar worship is the root-folk-indigenous layer transformed by ritualism and formalism, by Hindu-Buddhist polytheism and iconography. Slusser the anthropologist clearly overtakes Slusser the archaeologist in these—as in some of the early chapters. The disturbing question here is: how old are these 'indigenous cults'? Did they really prevail 'widely in prehistoric times since the Neolithic age' (p. 307)? Slusser seems to believe that they did. The foundations are of uncertain antiquity. Some of the sites of the Mother Goddesses—river-banks, ghāts, etc—may prove to be ancient. Most cult objects are aniconic and primitive. When they are iconic they are represented mostly in the *toraṇas*, conforming to late iconographic details which are tantric, vajrayāna or śakti. But not all Mother Goddesses are in such locations; some are in the city centre, others are in the cardinal limits of the city. In Kathmandu, such sites have legendary tales purporting to explain the location of a particular Mother Goddess—Luti, Lumarhi, Lucubholu. But such 'origin stories' are also prevalent about tantric Paculi Bhairava and Mahānkāla Bhairava, and, most unexpectedly, of Sighah Caitya! A number of these stories smack of late after-thoughts—one or two at least as late as Pratāpa Malla, a period when gods and god-like magicians seem to prefer to walk in the Valley.

The main conclusion of Slusser's study of Newar pantheon is clear: with the exception of *grāma-devatās*, root-folk-indigenous and assorted riverine gods and goddesses, Newar religion is by and large a provincial outpost of Indian polytheism. Slusser's analyses of Newar art, architecture and religion come to similar conclusions. Not that they are new or startling. They are not particularly revealing. For if we peel off the cultural strata of any Western country, no matter in which continent it is, we are likely to arrive at some uniform conclusions: their roots are Judaic-Christian and Greco-Roman with regional and provincial variations. But does such reductionism really help to interpret or explain such distinct cultures of the West as the Byzantine or the Renaissance?

Finally, to come back to Slusser's continuum hypothesis. At the present state of our knowledge, there are perhaps far too many gaps in Nepalese political and cultural history to be able to talk with any confidence and certitude. Between Jayadeva II (AD 733) and Jayasthiti Malla (AD 1382-1395) the political history of Nepal is merely a tantalising string of names collated with labour from the colophons of manuscripts and a few dozen fragmentary inscriptions which contain remarkably little history. The darkness which surrounds the sudden emergence of the Licchavis in AD 464 and their equally abrupt fizzling out are two uncomfortable brackets of ancient Nepalese history. The mystery which surrounds the obscure social origins of Jayasthiti Malla is at present impenetrable. Numerous monuments, Buddhist vihāras, offices and palaces prominently mentioned in Licchavi epigraphy cannot be identified with any certainty. Several Licchavi settlements are today desolate rice fields; some key sites like Deopāṭan and Hādigāon stand mute and benumbed by the ravages of time and men. Why and when they were obliterated and abandoned as political and cultural centres we do not know. In fact, nothing less than a gaping discontinuity is writ large on the history of Nepal—a discontinuity which can at best be glossed over with such handy terms as 'the Transitional Period'.

The book contains useful appendixes on eras and calendars, on scripts and languages in use in the Nepal Valley, including a very valuable chronology of kings and their known regnal years, and an inventory of Licchavi inscriptions. The bibliography is extensive, particularly in listing the publications of the Saṃśodhana Maṇḍala. Here, for the first time, is a book in which a Western scholar gratefully acknowledges the contributions made by Nepalese scholars. In the past, books on Nepalese history and culture written by authorities on Nepal—Western as well as Nepalese—used to be summaries of the writings of British-Indian civil/medical/military cadre. It is gratifying to see that this is no longer the case. The acknowledgements to Nepalese sources are ample, and in a few cases, fulsome. To give just one example, Slusser singles out śrī *Pācā Prithvināyaṇa Shāhako Upadeśa* (Patan: Jagadamba Press, 1968) edited by Naya Raj Pant and others as 'an outstanding contribution on the history of Nepal after AD 1769' (p. 78, footnote 168). It is an edition of a late manuscript of 10 pages in length. The edition is in five parts, running to a total of 1350 pages—the *magnum opus* of the group, according to its principal editor (Preface, p. 4). The

first part, oddly enough, begins with an anaemic versified interpretation of Prithvinarayan Shah by Naya Raj Pant, displaying the latter's competence in Sanskrit prosody. Then comes the prose version, not of the text, but of the poem. The actual text of *upadeśa* the book purports to edit is in an appendix between pp. 413-431! The edition includes a 109-page errata and addenda. A greater part of the 1350 pages is padded with extracts from the 1878 *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī*. Compare this antediluvian 'textual/critical edition' with Fr Ludwig Stiller's *Prithvi Narayan Shah in the Light of His Divya Upadesh* (Ranchi: 1968). A slim volume of barely 78 pages, it contains not only an eminently readable English translation of the *Upadeśa* text, but also one of the best available interpretations of it, clearly and concisely bringing out the life and times of the great soldier-statesman. Slusser's adulation of Saṃśodhana Maṇḍala is understandable, but why she chose such as inept specimen of their scholarship to do so is incomprehensible.

A sound knowledge of Sanskrit and Newari, particularly epigraphic Sanskrit and Classical Newari, tempered with some grounding in Nepalese paleography and calendars, is a basic prerequisite for working on the cultural materials of the Nepal Valley. Despite Slusser's association with 'impeccable historians' the book is not flawless. Factual errors are not rare. To exemplify from a single page (p. 9), the name *newāra* is used for the first time, not in AD 1654, but in AD 1652. On the same page Slusser writes:

> The first local occurrence (of the name *Nepāla*) is early seventh century, when King Amsuvarma began an edict with an expression *swasti nepālevyaḥ*.

Nearly a century ago, King Vasantadeva had used the phrase in AD 512, and the form is not *nepālevyaḥ*, but *naipālevyaḥ*. Slusser dates the invasion of Mukunda Sena to the mid-thirteenth century (p. 57, p. 69). The confirmed dates are AD 1525/26. Suvarṇapraṇālinagara is not Yaṅgala (p. 90), but Yambu, the northern half of Kathmandu, particularly Thahiti. On page 286, Slusser includes Mānadhar and Chitrakār among the Uray castes, which is not the case. Translation and transliteration errors are too many to list. A sampling is given below:

Vṛsadeva for Vṛṣadeva (p. 22 and ff.); Bhaktivada for Bhaktivāda (p. 75); *deśa gumne* for *deśa ghumne* (p. 93); *karṣapna* for *karṣāpṇa* (p. 37); *khā*

is door or gate, not boundary (p. 99); *Kanehala*, not *Karnel* (p.192); Plate 503, not plate 508 (p. 197); *Pāhācarhe*, not *Pācare* (p. 232); *Lākhe*, not *lakhe* (p. 238); Lumbini is not inside Nepal's frontier with Bihar, but with Uttar Pradesh (p. 271); the AD equivalent of one of the dates in the Thahiti Stupa inscription is not A.D. 1482, but A.D. 1582; *bahidyo boyegu* is not 'looking at the Gods in Vihāra' but 'displaying the Gods of the Vihāra' (p. 303); *guṃlā*, not *gulā* (p. 302); *gathu*, not *gāthā* (p. 347); *sāpāru*, not *saparu* (p. 303); *ṅā lākegu*, not *na lākegu* (p. 340); *paṭa*, not *pāṭa* (p. 346); *jāti ajimā*, not *jataka ajimā* (p. 363).

These are, of course, minor details, mentioned here mainly because the book comes from a distinguished writer sponsored by an equally distinguished publisher. No matter how one responds to it, Mary Slusser's *Nepal Mandala* will be considered an outstanding contribution to the cultural history of the Nepal Valley. For many years to come, it will continue to be our standard reference work on the culture of the Valley. The only foreseeable substitute for Slusser is the spade—an accursed implement in the Nepal Valley since Balbla first violated its sacred earth for wet rice cultivation.

21

Epigraphy and Society in Ancient Nepal: A Critique of Regmi, 1983

Cultural influence from the south must have (had) limited influence...The court and the upper strata of society must have been vulnerable to its approaches. But...the mass of humanity at the lower reaches remained by large animist. Even today some aspects of the life of a section of the old settlers betray signs of animistic practices.

–D.R. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, 1969, p. 82

Dilli Raman Regmi (b. 1913) has been in the field of Nepalese history for more than four decades. In 1942, he published a short paper on 'Sources for a History of Nepal 880-1680' (*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vol 28, pp. 31-36). In July 1983, the 3-volume *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* was published. In between he had published *A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal* (1950), *Ancient and Medieval Nepal* (1952), *Ancient Nepal* (1960), *Medieval Nepal* Vols I-III (1965), and *Medieval Nepal* Vol IV (1966), *Ancient Nepal* (1969), *Modern Nepal* Vol I (1975), and *Modern Nepal* Vol II (1975). By any standard, Regmi's corpus of published works is quite impressive and the span of his coverage, extensive. Because he is almost alone among Nepali historians to publish in English he is rather like the 19th-century chronicle edited by Residency-Surgeon, Daniel Wright—the only one familiar to the scholarly world outside Nepal. Even otherwise, Regmi's achievements seem staggering in the volume of work accomplished, particularly because, as his publisher puts it, he has been 'half in politics and half in scholarship'. Had he devoted himself fully to the world of scholarship—so much deeply rooted as it is

his genius, it would have been somewhat difficult to guess the volume of its output in the last 40 years.

Regmi's work as well as well reputation is imposing, covering all the three fields of Nepalese historiography—ancient, mediaeval, and modern Nepal. In the last 30 years, Regmi's work on ancient Nepal in particular has undergone three revisions. We have the 1952, the 1960, the 1969, and the latest 1983 version. One secure way to approach Regmi's work would seem to be to assess his latest, i.e., the most finished, product. At the same time, in the words of the publisher, his *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* is 'the latest attempt at compiling and editing of inscriptional source materials'—the most important source for the history of ancient Nepal. Thus, it is with some trepidation as well as unalloyed hope of unearthing the vintage Regmi that we have, in this detailed review article, decided to analyse his latest publication. As only three out of the projected four volumes have actually been published—the promised volume 'exclusively devoted to socio-economic conditions of ancient Nepal' is not yet in sight even two and a half years later—the work remains hypothetically incomplete. We can, however, guess the shape of the things to come on the basis of the available three volumes.

Commentators on ancient inscriptions of Nepal have offered confusing interpretations, reading much of their own meaning into the text of the inscriptions. A wholesome feature of this book is the stance Regmi has taken in his analysis and interpretation of certain inscriptions. For example, he refuses to identify the literal meaning of an inscription with its historical meaning:

> I am not explaining the significance of the passages in terms of their literal meaning, which could be misleading from a historical point of view.[1]

The best examples of Regmi's critical stance are his analysis and interpretation of the panegyrics of Mānadeva I and Jayadeva II (Inscription Nos, I and CXLII). The analysis of Jayadeva II's panegyric, particularly its poetry, is a noteworthy example of the historian at his desk-work. Regmi comments:

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1 Regmi, 1983, p. 35.

> The inscription is so exaggerated that it amounts to gross falsification of historical truth [i.e., the offer of a silver lotus with eight petals to Paśupati by Jayadeva's mother Vatsadevī—KPM].[2]

In course of the analysis of both the panegyrics, Regmi raises a number of important questions which are relevant to the study of the political history of ancient Nepal. The fact that a certain detail occurs in an inscription does not necessarily insure its historicity. Inscriptions are somewhat like the editorials in the *Gorkhapatra:* they are *commissioned* to fulfil certain persuasive-communicative functions. They are the ancient versions of the present-day media. Regmi, therefore, attempts to verify every detail and refuses to take the claims of the composers of the inscriptions at their face value. At times, he takes his approach to an *ad absurdum* limit, resulting in such embarrassingly naive commentary as the following:

> Our inscriptions shower praise upon praise on Mānadeva for his munificence, his fatherly attitude to his subjects, his desire to serve the people with mercy and high sense of polity. But we do not know if Mānadeva or any other king could have abandoned autocratic feudal habits and behaviour to earn these epithets. By the very nature of institution the monarch becomes a dictator.[3]

Regmi's contribution in this work lies in his attempt to study ancient inscriptions of Nepal in the light of Indian texts—contemporary Indian inscriptions in general and Indian classical *dharmaśāstra* texts in particular. This is at once the strength *as well as* the major weakness of the work. In his discussion of the broad features of the inscriptions (pp. 2-6), he clearly brings out the common features among the Licchavi inscription of Nepal and the Indian inscriptions issued by the Guptas. Not only the script (later Brāhmī or Gupta), the language (classical Sanskrit), the idiom and diction (pious, florid and high-flown), but also several conventions and 'technical terminology' are common. Regmi also singles out some local features of Nepalese inscriptions (e.g., the absence of elaborate royal genealogies). Neither Vajrācārya's nor earlier

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2 Regmi, 1983, p. 237.

3 Regmi, 1983, pp. 35:39.

editions of the inscriptions brings this into such clear relief against the Indian context.

Regmi's backdrop of Indian epigraphy and classical texts is also one of the misleading components of the work. The Nepalese historian by necessity needs to refer to these sources primarily for two purposes: 1) to trace the sources of the ideas and concepts; and 2) to define as precisely as possible the semantics of these of epigraphic vocabulary. More often than not, Regmi is carried away by the course of his learned references to Indian epigraphy or classical texts. Topics which could have been briefly and precisely dealt with or defined in a one-sentence glossary or one-passage commentary, preoccupies Regmi for five tightly printed quarto pages. Numerous so-called 'technical terms' can be relegated to a concise glossary with a one-line definition. The greatest disappointment in this verbose and pedantic exercise of Regmi's tends to come when, after five pages of a long-winded digression into Indian inscriptions and texts, he does not add much to our understanding of the meaning or function of the particular term or terms in the Nepalese context. He finds himself a little helpless whenever he is faced with 'technical terms' not available in the corpus of Indian epigraphy, and unfortunately there are dozens of such words in Nepalese epigraphy whose precise historical meaning is always debatable even though they are Sanskrit (e.g., *trikara, hiraṇya, bhūmi, mānika, draṅga, aṣṭādaśaprakṛti).*

We must, nevertheless, be grateful to Regmi for the facsimile plates of the inscriptions which have come out so clearly for the first time. Some of the plates are admirable in the quality of reproduction and legibility, whereas others are not as good, particularly because of the ratio of reduction in size. At any rate, the plates are decidedly better than Raniero Gnoli's *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters* (Rome, 1956), or Hari Ram Joshi's edition (1974) in which few plates are usable. Regmi's plates clearly show two preponderant physical features of ancient inscriptions of Nepal. Most of the inscriptions are badly damaged—some deliberate acts, others due to wear and tear of time. Secondly, nearly half of the extant inscriptions are mere short and fragmentary pious deeds of grant. The remaining 70-80 inscriptions are, unfortunately, not evenly distributed in time. Because of their damaged and ill-preserved condition, the surviving inscriptions are not read uniformly by epigraphists. To give one brilliant example, take Regmi's inscription No CLX (Vol I: p. 162): Gnoli read the date as 172

and the name of the king as Sivadeva; Vajrācārya read the date as 271 and the name of the king as Baladeva; Joshi merely copied Gnoli; Mohan Khanal (1984) reads the date as 172, but the name of the king as Saṅkaradeva; Regmi reads the date as 271 but the name of the king as Baradeva.

Regmi has listed some of the variant readings from Bhagawanlal Indrajit (1880), Cecil Bendall (1886), Sylvain Lévi (1908), Gnoli (1956), Vajācārya (1973) and Joshi (1974). He repeatedly claims that he has improved upon the readings, commentary and translation by Vajācārya. This claim needs to be verified by more competent authorities than this reviewer, particularly by epigraphists and Sanskritists who have been in the field for some time. But even a casual scrutiny of the first 17 inscriptions has revealed that Regmi's Sanskrit texts are studded with glaring errors, particularly in word-compounding and numerals, and that his 'Corrigenda and Addenda to Vol I' (pp. 187-190) represents just about 10 per cent of the actual errors in the Devanagari transcription of the Sanskrit text of the 17 inscriptions. Reviewing the book recently in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, a young Nepali scholar has commented that there are more than 50 mistakes in Regmi's transcriptions of Mānadeva I's Cangu Inscription in Vol I, and that his English translation in Vol II does not appear to be from the original Sanskrit version.[4]

Exactitude is a hallmark of sound scholarship, but unfortunately not of Regmi's so far. In a six-page Preface (p. v-x), he has given six publication-dates and details of the most well-known publications on ancient Nepalese history, and all of them are wrong. For example,

Publication	Date according to Regmi	Correct Date
Bhagawanlal Indrajit	1888	1880
Lévi, Vol. III	1902	1908
Shastri Vol. II	1906	1916
Gnoli	1958	1956
No. of Inscriptions in Gnoli	92	89
Vajācārya	1977	1973

Regmi's documentation is a perfect mess so that with the help of his 'References' or 'Bibliography' it is impossible to trace anything. Apart

4 G. Vajācārya, 1985, pp. 652-653.

from the four-page 'Corrigenda and Addenda' to Vol. 1, the five-page 'Corrigenda and Addenda' to Vol II, and one-page 'Addenda' to Vol. III, there are white paints and pasted strips used on page 273 (Vol II). What finally shattered this reviewer is the four-page mimeographed 'Supplement o the Vol III: Errata and Addenda', dated July 1, 1983, which begins with the following disclaimer:

> The printing of the 3rd volume was handled throughout solely by the publisher and his proof reader in Delhi. Therefore, it is natural that some mistakes should occur here and there in the circumstances.

The supplement ends with

> I have not gone through the book deeply and minutely...But there might be many more errors.

Notwithstanding the alleged breakdown of communication between the author and the publisher, we must admire Regmi's intellectual stamina as well as his moral courage to publish a work such as *this* after forty years' devotion to the field of Nepalese history.

Regmi's Model and Approach

The errors of fact, style, idiom and syntax are so extensive in the book that it would be a meaningless exercise (for anyone but Regmi) to discuss them here. The review will, therefore, ignore these trivialities and focus on Regmi's approach to epigraphic data. It is almost clear from his mimeographed 'Supplement' that Regmi's work does not seem to have any conceptual framework other than the most rudimentary one of political chronology (i.e., the Age of X followed by the Age of Y, and the Restoration of Z, etc). Consequently, Regmi—in his inscription analysis and interpretation of the total corpus of ancient Nepalese epigraphy—fails to see the wood for the trees. He follows the Vajācārya (1973) model so closely that he takes the same or similar approach to the epigraphic data. As a result, no complete picture of the social, cultural, economic and political system emerges; we see no trace of a society or culture in evolution or in the process of growth or change for four hundred years. No society or culture stays sunk for four centuries; at least, Licchavi records show that theirs did not.

Regmi focuses on political history. In Licchavi records, it is not a fruitful focus because not much really happens in terms of war, conquest or dynastic power struggles. What little political history of the Licchavi period we know is based on Chinese and Tibetan sources. In the whole corpus of some 190 odd Sanskrit inscriptions, there is not a single detail comparable to the notices on Nepal recorded in the Tang Annals. In the directness or the representation of the datum of political history, there is nothing in the Sanskrit inscriptions of Nepal which can compare with the following single line entry in the Tun-huang Annals for the year AD 641:[5]

> Bal po yu sna kug ti bkum na ri ba ba rgyal phor bchug
> (Nepal's Visnugupta was killed [in the battle by] Narendradeva [who was] proclaimed/chosen the king.)

Or, the following notices in the Tang Annals about Narendradeva.

> The father of Naling-ti po was deposed (put to death—new T'ang Annals) by his younger brother (rebellious usurper—New T'ang Annals); Naling-ti-po had to escape from his uncle, Tu'fan. Tibet gave him refuge and re-established him on his throne; he became in consequence its vassal.[6]

Regmi follows the Vajācārya model so closely that even the sum-total of the sub-headings of the two books show disturbing family resemblances. Yet Regmi's relations with Vajācārya's work is one of 'love-hate'. He questions and criticises several elements of Vajācārya's interpretation. A number of them are quite valid (e.g., on *astadasaprakrti* on Amsuvarma-Gupta relations). However, too often Regmi merely adopts polemical postures—refering to Vajācārya as 'one (sic) writer'—raising inconsequential questions. In his efforts to outdo Vajācārya, Regmi goes on to refer to more Indian classical texts than Vajācārya has done, trying to show relentlessly that Regmi is more learned in the Indian lore than Vajācārya. The net result of this pursuit to outbid Vajācārya in his own game is that Regmi has produced an interpretation of ancient Nepalese

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5 Bacot *et al*, 1946, p. 13.
6 Lévi, 1905, I, pp. 164-165.

society and culture which is a more Hinduised, more Brahminical history of the Aryavarta itself! Regmi's reading of Nepalese inscriptions is so India-centric that one often wonders whether he even remembers that he is reading Nepalese—and not Indian—inscriptions. The historian appears to forget the fundamental facts of Nepal's social history, i.e., even after the two millennia of Hindu penetration into the Himalayas, the foundations of Nepalese society are at least 27 per cent tribal. Such a mistake can easily be committed by any scholar who is so thoroughly soaked in the Indian classical texts—as Regmi obviously seems to be. Or, it can be made by those scholars who—by accident or by design—ignore current research on anthropology, sociology, and, above all, on non-Indo-Aryan comparative linguistics. No one who is even remotely familiar with some of the work done on Nepal in the above fields would have ignored, as Regmi has done in this work, the social, cultural, and economic *context* of the epigraphic *texts*.

In this paper we focus on some of *the key issues* in the interpretation of the epigraphic data. To begin with, we would like to give a few preliminary details concerning the data as such. The total corpus of ancient Nepalese epigraphy consists of some 189 inscriptions in Sanskrit in Gupta characters—almost all inscribed on stone. They fall into five main categories: 1) royal edicts—total 85, nearly half of them belonging to 31 years of the Sivadeva-Amsuvarma period (AD 590-621); 2) short inscriptions, consecrating cult-objects, water-conduits, wells and tanks—total 65; 3) short inscriptions with dates and/or names of the donors—total 34; 4) verses in praise of given Hindu-Buddhist sects by their votaries—total 8; and 5) panegyrics—total 2. Geographically, the inscriptions are concentrated in Kathmandu (44), Patan (19), Thānkot-Balambuū (19), Sāṅkhuū (7), Bhaktapur (3), Tistung-Chitlāng (5), Pharping (3), Gorkha (2), and one each in the following settlements outside the Valley: Lele, Nuwākot, Kewalpur, Sāṅgā, Nālā, Banepā, Khopasi, Palāúcoka and Dumjā.

Chronology: Limited Data and Multiple Variables

Of the several issues of interpretation of the epigraphic data, the very first one is that of chronology—an issue which Regmi takes up in confusing sections on 'the Astronomical Data in the Inscriptions' (pp. 22-23; pp. 265-270). To formulate the debatable issues in brief, there are two sets of dates used in the inscriptions: the first set begins from

an *unnamed* era year 386 and ends with 535. The second set begins from another *unnamed* era year 29 and ends with 301. By general consensus of knowledgeable opinions the first set is assigned to Śaka Era (founded in AD 78) and the second set to Mānadeva Era (founded in AD 576). The problems of chronology are complicated by two main factors.

i. Limited nature of the data: Out of the total 56 dated inscriptions in the Śaka era-set there are only seven inscriptions with intercalated dates but none with the day of the week. Out of the total 54 dated inscriptions in the Mānadeva era-set there are only three inscriptions with intercalated dates, only two of them with the day of the week.
ii. The intercalated months in all the 10 inscriptions are either āṣāḍha or Pauṣa. In the Hindu calendar there is a difference of more than 10 days between a solar year and a lunar year so that every three years there are 33 days difference between the lunar and solar years. Intercalation is adding an extra month in the lunar year to adjust with the solar year so that seasonal festivals fall in the appropriate seasons. However, there are at least five variables involved in the intercalated dates:

a. Whether the year began in the month of Caitra or in the month of Kārttika;
b. Whether the lunar month began with the full moon *(amānta)*, or with the new moon *(pūrṇimānta)*;
c. Whether the intercalated months were computed according to Sūrya Siddāanta (revealed by Surya to Asura Maya in Romaka (!) ca. AD 505?), or Brahma Siddhānta (founded in AD 628), or Arya Siddhānta (founded in AD 499).
d. If the Sūrya Siddāanta was the one in use, whether the calculations were according to the true *(spaṣṭa)*, or the mean *(madhyama)* motions of the sun and the moon; and
e. Whether the Nārada system or the Bhradvāja system was followed; for Narada the half years begin with the equinoxes and for Bhāradvāja with the solstices.

As far as current research has been able to determine, the calendar

followed in ancient Nepal was *Kārttikādi amānta*, i.e., the calendar year began with the month of Kārttika (ca. last week of October-first week of November), and the months ended with the new moon. Only two months were intercalated: āṣāḍha and Pausa. According to Petech's latest findings based on meticulous computation of 45 intercalated dates from NS 132-574, the mediaeval calendar works neither with the Nārada nor with the Bāaradvja system, but with a year beginning with a *Mārgasśirṣa*.[7] Reckoning with *Agrahāyana* for the purposes of intercalation is *not* followed in any of the historical eras current in India. Nepal has preferred to use local eras at least twice—the Mānadeva Era and the Nepāla Era (founded on October 20, 879). There is so far no convincing cultural or political argument why Nepal's ruling elite should have used the pan-Indian śaka Era in the first set of inscriptions.

The only *firm* date of ancient Nepalese chronology are the *three* dates recorded in Chinese sources. Without them the Licchavi chronology would have been somewhat like a ship with no anchor. In 641, the Tibetans helped Narendradeva to overthrow the usurper Viṣṇugupta, restoring the Licchavis to the Nepalese throne. In AD 648 the Tibetans sought and obtained Nepalese collaboration in their support for the imperial ambassador Wang Hsuan-tse, who had been robbed and whose escort had been massacred in Tirhut. The Chinese notices on Nepal close with the mission dispatched by Narendradeva to the Chinese court in AD 651 as a diplomatic gesture. The available dates for Narendradeva in Nepalese inscriptions range from the year 67-103 whereas those of Viṣṇugupta extend up 65 Phālguṇa śukla Dvitīyā. So, any time during the gap of 22 months between this date and 67 Pauṣa śukla Paúcamī, the usurper Viṣṇugupta must have been overthrown by Nerandradeva. Working with an epoch era beginning from October 20, 576 scholars calculate the chronology of the inscriptions dated between the years 29 and 301. However, recently, the Japanese Tibetologist Yamaguchi, working on Tibetan materials, found that the epoch era began in AD 572, not in AD 576—adding one further complication of a four-year variable.[8]

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7 Petech, 1984, pp. 13-20.

8 Yamaguchi, 1978, pp. 29-57.

Thus, the chronology of ancient Nepal is complicated because the available data are limited and the variables involved in the calculations are several. The possible permutations and combinations of the variables to interpret only three available dates with the day of the week for a time span of more than four centuries using two unnamed epoch eras, are simply unimaginable. For the time being, we are compelled to take the conventional solution for granted and work by assigning the first set of inscriptions (year 386-535) to Kārttikādi amānta śaka era; the second set of inscriptions (year 29-301) to Kārtikādi amānta Mānadeva era, founded on October 20, 576.

Regmi's treatment of the problems of chronology is not only confusing but also inconclusive. His final words are memorably desperate:

> In the ultimate analysis it is to be admitted that the problem of verification [of the dates—KPM] falling within the epoch of the śaka era defies solution.[9]
>
> The subject of verification is so intricate that there is nothing final to come to satisfactory conclusion in this respect.[10]

What Are the Inscriptions About?

This paper is based on the hypothesis that the ancient inscriptions of Nepal are about land and income from land, either in the form of grant (royal or philanthropic) or in the form of exemptions and concessions granted by the King in favour of a given settlement or institution—concession in tax, revenue, customs, etc. Of the five types of inscriptions, at least the first two comprising some 150 inscriptions are *directly* related to income from land. As Regmi and, for that matter, most Nepalese historians, have ignored the relationship between land and political power, or between culture and income from the land, we would like to investigate how both power and piety of the ruling elite of ancient Nepal were rooted in the surplus income they appropriated from land.

Land was almost invariably owned on communal basis in the tribal societies in Nepal. This mode of landownership persisted during the

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9 Regmi, 1983, p. 276.

10 Regmi, 1983, p. 269.

Shah-Rana period, in fact, right up to 1968, when the communal ownership over land was finally abolished by legal action. In the words of M.C. Regmi,

> the Kipat system [communal ownership over land—author] in its present form is a relic of the customary land tenure that the Mongolian communities established in the areas occupied by them prior to Indo-Aryan penetration. The politically dominant Indo-Aryans tended to prefer such statutory tenure forms as Birta, as the conflict between these tenure forms and the customary Kipat tenure must inevitably have been decided to the detriment of the latter. It can hardly be an accident that the Kipat system is presently confined to the hill districts of the country, mainly East Nos 1-4, Dhankuta, and Ilam in Eastern Nepal and Palpa, Gulmi, Doti, Dailekh, West No. 1 and West No. 2 in Western Nepal. Moreover, the scope of this system appears to have been much more extensive formerly, for there were Kipat holdings at one time even in Kathmandu Valley.[11]

Among the Limbus, Chepangs, Hayus, Danuwars, Putwars, Thamis, Kumhales, Murmis as well as in several pockets of the Nepal Valley, communal ownership of land persisted. More than 4 per cent of the total available land in Nepal still belonged to the communal ownership in 1950. A recent paradigm of alienation of tribal land by Hindu immigrants in Limbuwan is investigated and lucidly documented by Caplan (1970). A more or less similar process of slow but steady alienation of communally owned land appears to have taken place in ancient Nepalese society soon after the Licchavis came to power in the Nepal Valley. According to the Hindu traditions as laid down, for example, in classical texts such as Kauṭalya's *Arthaśāstra*, the King or State owned all land, not the tribe or the clan, nor the community customarily occupying a territory. The tribal concept of land as territory (not property) held in common by the tribe (temporally symbolised by the chief or headman) was replaced by the Hindu theory that all land belonged to the King who allotted statutory tenure rights to individuals or institutions or communities.

Regmi's treatment of the land system in ancient Nepal is

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11 M.C. Regmi, 1978, pp. 538-539.

disappointing.[12] He does not even bother to ask a number of fundamental questions on landownership, let alone answer them. The fundamental questions is: who owned land in ancient Nepal? Apart from the crown lands *(sītā)*, royal fields, farms, orchards and forests owned by the King and his family, there were at least three distinct land-owning classes—the priests (religious and holy men), members of the nobility, and the trading community. On a close scrutiny of the inscriptions, it is clear that apart from the reigning king, it is the members of the land-holding classes who donated land or income from land for maintaining religious, cultural and philanthropic activities. The king granted land to institutions and religious foundations which were tax-free and administratively autonomous. The king also granted land, instead of salary, to state functionaries *(vṛttibhujaīḥ)*, probably in the form of conditional land-rights which may have been alienable once the functionary ceases to be on service, more or less like modern *khāngī*. The first cultivator who reclaimed waste land or forests also enjoyed tenure-rights *(bhūmichidranyāya)*.

Statutory tenure-rights in land through state grants in favour of the nobility, the priests, the courtiers, the holy men, the army and the royal clan were the cornerstone of the social, economic and political frame-work of a Hindu State in all ages and climes. Income from land constituted the primary source of wealth and political power. Therefore, state control over land and private modes of landownership would have had profound significance in organising the foundations of the Licchavi state, society and culture. Those who owned land also owned the political power, perhaps, more appropriately, vice versa. Except in the case of the direct tillers (i.e., those who tilled, ploughed, harrowed, sowed, weeded and harvested their own land), all cultivated land in ancient Nepal had tenants *(kutumbin-s)*. Thus, the structure of property relations in land was fundamentally feudal in nature. The tenants paid rent *(piṇḍaka)*, be it to the King, his kinsmen, the nobility, the functionaries of the State, the priests or the religious-cultural foundations. Thus, the next key question is: what was the ratio of the rent to the actual harvest? It seems that the ratios varied from land to land depending upon its fertility and location. If the land is owned by the King, the accepted ratio, at least in classical texts, is one-sixth to

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12 Regmi, 1983, pp. 28-30.

one-twelfth—the so-called *ṣaḍbhāga* or simply *bhāga*. If the land is owned by others the rent varied from 40 per cent to 75 per cent of the actual harvest. This structure of property in land is the basic key to ancient Nepalese society and culture, and the ideology underlying both. These inscriptions are the most significant documents to test this hypothesis because they are, in the last analysis, about the royal share, rent and tax—about the righteousness of 'the three just and proper taxes' *(samucitstrikara)*. It was the income from land which sustained not only religious-cultural institutions and cult objects and rituals, or philanthropic work such as wells, water-tanks and conduits, but also political institutions such as the monarchy and the nobility who lived on the toil of the direct producers.

There are a couple of passages in the Chinese notices on Nepal which depicted the pomp, glamour and high life-style of the Nepalese court, representing the acme of the golden age of Nepalese culture. The economic foundations of Narendradeva's Seat of Lions were none other than the surplus from land, appropriated by the State in the form of revenue, royal share of crops *(bhāga)*, periodic supplies *(bhoga)*, tax *(kara)*, tax in cash *(hiraṇya)*, sales tax, and customs *(śulka)*. In addition to these, the State and its officials asked the villagers to do forced porterage in the form of corvee for specified purposes. So, the King of Kings, Licchavi Narendradeva's towered palace and Seat of Lions erected on the toil and surplus of the direct producer who probably lived in the closed and unpretentious villages in much the same way as the present-day Newar peasants in settlements such as Pāṅgā, Khokanā, Sunākothi, Sāṅgā, Nālā and Boḍe. At least, in this respect, the ancient inscriptions of Nepal are quite candid: it was because the peasantry was so heavily taxed and burdened that inscription after inscription the royalty considered it a great favour *(prasāda)* to a given village community to grant tax concessions and yet to remind its temporal and spiritual leaders to continue to pay *samucitstrikara* (the three just and proper taxes—the royal share of crops, the periodic supplies to the palace, and the taxes in cash and kind).

What has Regmi to comment on this fundamental question? All that he has to say on the land system in ancient Nepal is focused on the meaning of three words:

> As we look into the land grants three words come before us in this

connection, and all these three words are the only indications of land measure and a contribution to be paid by the cultivators. These three words are *māṇikā*, or *mā*, the grain measure, *bhūmi*, the land measure, and *piṇḍakam*, contribution in paddy or grains...The land system of ancient Nepal is not yet an established fact. The land measure remains unknown and so is the grain measure. The word *pindaka* might be a tax or rent, but it has got to be ascertained.[13]

Obviously, Regmi has built an unshakable confidence on the possibilities of a historical interpretation of the land system of ancient Nepal only when the *quantitative meanings* of the three key *words—bhūmi, mānikā* and *piṇḍaka*—are finally unlocked by Indian epigraphic glosses. There is nothing more vacuous than this preoccupation with the words.

The Village Community

The 85 inscriptions which are royal charters, are almost always addressed to a *specific village community*, so there is some justice in focusing our attention on the village community. It was the fundamentally basic unit of Licchavi social structure and its polity. Nearly 80 years ago, on the basis of his critical analysis of a handful ancient inscriptions from Nepal, Lévi had made a perceptive observation in this regard:

> In the face of the King and the Court, exposed to the vicissitudes of revolutions which sweep at a time a dynasty and its supporters, the population retains an immutable organisation in its traditional temper. Whether the Thakuris supercede the Licchavis or the Mallas ascend the throne, whether the sovereign power is in the hands of an emperor or is dispersed among the real chiefs, the village community *(grāma)* remains always in the eyes of the people the real and only political unit in Nepal as well as in India.[14]

The village community had two main heads: the headman *(pradhāna)*, who was a temporal head, and the village priest *(brāhmaṇa)*, who was its spiritual head. The headman was in all likelihood, a survival of the

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13 Regmi, 1983, pp. 28-30.
14 Lévi, 1905, I, p. 281.

tribal chief whereas the village priest may well have been 'the tribal priest who borrowed the Brahaman's way of life'.[15] The priest-astrologer determined the periods of cultivation—auspicious and inauspicious days. The keeper of irrigation regulated the supply of water between the village farms. Assisted by a few other 'specialists' such as the potter, the carpenter and the blacksmith, the village community consisted almost entirely of farming families *(kṣetrīn-s* or *kutumbin-s)*. Economically, each village community was a self-sufficient or self-contained unit. The community produced, as most Newar villages until recently did, nearly everything it needed. Whatever it did not produce locally, such as salt, metal, cotton or oil, were exchanged for grains or money. The surplus produce surrendered either to the lord or to the State was in the main all that entered the market for sale. Immediate disputes in the village were settled by the council of elders *(pāúcālī)*. Cultural activities and institutions were maintained by corporate bodies *(goṣthi)*. The community looked after its temple, their rituals, annual festivals, public works, water-tanks, conduits, irrigations-canals, wells, roads, farms, and orchards. Water—both drinking and irrigating—was looked after most seriously; disputes over the management and distribution of irrigation water between villages were taken up directly by the King's private court (*paramāśana*). The village community paid taxes in cash and kind; some on production, others on sale of a wide range of goods such as garlic, onion, vegetables, oil, cloth, fish, chicken, sheep, pigs and pottery. Entertainment taxes were levied on bullfights. Customs were levied on the export of iron, fly-whisk, musk, copper-utensils and mustard-seeds. Apart from the royal share of crops on crown lands, the village community paid rent in kind to the landowners, which amounted to anything from 40 per cent to 75 per cent of the crops. The villagers were required to do unpaid labour and porterage for the lord or the State or both. The King and his officials or police interfered with the village community either for the levy of revenue/taxes *(karāṣāḍhana)*, or for handing over official/statutory landgrants and tax concessions *(lekhyadāna)*, or for the administration of justice, particularly against five great crimes *(paúcāparadha)*. Otherwise, the village community was, for all intents and purposes, a self-governing social, cultural, economic and political unit. Even when the traditional customs of a village

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15 Weber, 1958, p. 10.

community were against the grain of Hindu social norms, as in the loose morality of the women referred to in Inscription No. 107, the Licchavi administration let the village community have its own way.

The Village and the Palace

The main links between the village community and the palace were the palace offices and officers, on the one hand, and the village headman, on the other. The most important link-figures were the *brahmuṅ*, who was later replaced by the *dauvāika* (the ancient version of the modern *dvāre)*, who was the chief judicial authority in a village. The *dauvārika* was linked with the doorkeeper at the palace in charge of a particular village *(pratihāra)*. The King sent his messenger *(dutaka)*, often his main feudatory or heir-apparent to execute his deeds and interpret his charter to the village community. Mostly, however, it was the tax-collectors *(chāṭa-bhāṭa)* or the representatives *(adhikṛta)* of the tax-collecting, revenue administration and judicial offices *(adhikarṇa-s)* which made the royal presence felt. More than 80 per cent of the royal charters, therefore, prohibited these officers and constables from entering a given village as an act of royal favour *(viśiṣṭa-prasāda)*.

The King lived in style and pomp, surrounded by the bureaucracy—though a rudimentary one—stationed in the several wings of the Royal Chancery or palace. In the beginning, we hear mainly of the four offices— Liṅgval, śolla, Māpcok and Kūthera. None of these names is in Sanskrit. They were probably the relics of the tribal toll-collection posts, inherited intact by the Licchavi rulers. The *Kuthera* collected taxes due to the royal treasury and controlled landed property. The *śolla* had jurisdiction over the five great crimes which included theft, murder, adultery and treason. The *Liṅgval* looked after irrigation and water-supply. The *Māpcok* administered civil affairs, especially marriage, divorce and other related disputes. Later on, these offices receded into the background, to be replaced or taken over by cardinal offices—Purvādhikaraṇa, Paścimādhikaraṇa, etc, after the days of Amśuvarmā (AD 594-621). These offices were probably named after the four or five palace gates. The most important palaces mentioned by name in the Licchavi inscriptions at different times were: Mānagṛha (AD 505-641), Kailāśakūṭa Bhavana (AD 606-659; AD 695-733), Bhadrādhivāsa (AD 671-679), Salambū Rājavāsa (AD 705), Puṇḍri Rājkula (ca. 594), Dakṣṇarājakūla (ca. 594, 613, ca. 733). Some scholars

have identified the last one with Gunpo or Hanūman Dhokā,[16] whereas the locations of the rest are still a matter of conjecture. The most important of royal officers were *Mahāpratihāra* (Minister in Charge of Palace Affairs), *Sarvadaṇḍanāyaka* (Chief Minister) and the *Balādhyakṣya* or *Mahābalādhyakṣya* (Commander). The *Viṣayapati* (head of regional administration), *Saulkika* (head of the customs department), and *Gaulmika* (officer in charge of a post), and *Taponādhikṛta* (tax officer) almost exhaust the list of the bureaucracy or state servants *(aṣṭādaśaprakṛti)* who are traditionally considered to be 18 in number. Some picture of the Licchavi palace establishment can be pieced together from Aṃśuvarmā's Hārigāon Inscription (No. 69), dated Saṃvat 30/AD 606.

The Tribal Substratum of the Village Community

The ancient inscriptions of Nepal are the elite or establishment version of social, cultural and political values because they are the pious deeds and panegyrics of the ruling elites. These documents represent Hindu social and cultural veneer at the top of a tribal society. Even after the 2500 years of Hindu or Brahmin penetration in the Himalayas, 27 percent of Nepal's total population are still tribal. In the Nepal Himalaya, the Valley of Nepal was the earliest contact-zone between the Hindus and the tribals. Probably, the earliest contacts of the Valley with the Indo-Aryans went back to the early centuries BC—inaugurated by the long-distance traders in woollen goods and exotic herbs, to be followed by the missionaries of India's great apostolic religions. We do not know exactly *when* or *how* the Indo-Aryans who claimed to be Licchavis came to Nepal. The chronicles such as the 14th-century *Gopaāarājavaṃśāvalī* indicate that the Licchavis came to power in Nepal by conquest over the tribal populations *(kirāta)*. Some puranic texts such as *Paśupati Purāṇa* (compiled in the 16th century?), on the other hand, indicate that the Liccahvis conquered the Kirātas by 'outmaneuvering them with superior skill with words and power of inducing trust' (XVII: 12-15). No matter when or how the Indo-Aryans claiming Licchavi descent came to power in the Nepal Valley, the tribal occupation of the Valley prior to the Indo-Aryan migrations is irrefutable. In the words of a noted scholar of Licchavi culture and history,

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16 G. Vajācārya, 1975.

> The Licchavi inscriptions tell (us) of a society consisting of migrant people from India. About the position of the aboriginal people these inscriptions are *almost* silent.[17]

Notwithstanding the information blackout on the aboriginal populations of the valley, the Licchavi inscriptions are replete with unintended data on the tribal substrata of contemporary society. For example, the expression *kirātavarṣadhara* (a Kirāta attendant[18]). There are at least a few personal names such as Sindrira, Rogamāca, Kedumbata and Gecchimdhaka, which are non-Indo-Aryan if not Tibeto-Burman. We have analysed and discussed the Tibeto-Burman features of some 200 nominals encountered in the running Sanskrit texts of Licchavi inscriptions, including 35 hydronyms and 16 hillock names.[19] The fact that the data are linguistic does not mean that their relevance is confined to language. Because Regmi's treatment of the so-called 'Kirata Problem' is misleading we will first quote him in full before commenting on it:

> There is no reliable evidence to support the Kirāta domination in the Valley...If Newari was a popular language in those days the Mongoloid influence is indelible but this is confined only to the dialect spoken. In no other cultural spheres the Kirātas are in evidence. So any hypothesis in that connection might be ruled out at his stage (p. 155). The trace of Kirāta culture is invisible due to non-identity as well as non-availability of data identified with the complex (p. 191) Who were the original settlers of the Valley?...
>
> Perhaps, they were the Austroids or Mediterranean people—the common ancestors of the Santals, Savaras, Kolis, and Bhils (p. 192). The Kirātas, whatever the time they migrated, came to dominate the Nepal Valley so as to impose their language on the inscriptions...The Kirātas as primitive people had migrated to overwhelm the local population because their number was larger than that of any other migrant section and there is no doubt that the latter absorbed them but in return accepted their language though everything worked under the dominant

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17 J.C. Regmi, 1978, p. 8.
18 See Monier-Williams, 1899, p. 927.
19 Malla, 1981; Malla, 1983a; and Malla, 1985.

> Sanskritic influence (p. 192)... Whether the non-Sanskritic names are of the Mongolian family of languages or they belonged to a different family...What is the standard by which to judge their character? One must judge them by the structural pattern and meaning of the linguistic form concerned. But here none of the words we have mentioned show characteristics of Mongoloid strain by structure or meaning. (p. 265)

We do not quite know why, in the first place, the historian, who for the last 40 years has been grimly adhering to his bold but worn-out hypothesis of the 'original Austroid or Dravidian or Mediterranean settlers in the Valley' without ever producing a single piece of convincing evidence, thinks that there is no reliable evidence for Kirāta domination in other cultural domains than language. Except for his hypothesis of 'original Austroid settlers in the Valley' there is almost no consistency in Regmi's views if we trace them from his 1948 paper entitled 'The Antiquity of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley' to his 1960, 1969, and 1983 versions of *Ancient Nepal*. In the latest 1983 version, Regmi is sadly confused because he is writing on a field with which he is not familiar. In the first place, he is confused between the two English words *Mongolian* (of Mongolia, a country in Asia) and *Mongoloid* (a conceptual abstraction in physical anthropology referring to a racial type). Secondly, he is confused between Mongolian-Mongoloid family of languages (which does not exist) and the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Thirdly, he is confused between Mongoloid (race) and Tibeto-Burman (language). Finally, he does not care to clarify what exactly he means by 'the structural pattern and meaning of the linguistic form concerned' (which one, please, out of more than 200 nominals?).

Regmi believes that the Kirāta influence on Licchavi society and culture is confined to language. This is no longer tenable a view of the available data. On the contrary, the linguistic data show that the Kirātas had left a most pervasive influence on Licchavi society, culture, administration in general and material culture in particular. For example, the Licchavis inherited and then assimilated the tax administration evolved by the Kirātas. The Licchavis gave Hindu legitimacy to the tribal chiefs, priest, village council of elders, mutual help trusts by giving them a royal sanction and a Sanskrit name. Numerous cultural establishments such as-*Guṃ-vihāra, Bhumbhukkikā-Jalaśayaṇa, Mātiṅ-Devakula, Tegval-Nārāyaṇa, Mīrmelītī-Saṅkara-nārāyaṇa, Thaṃsaṃpriṃ-deva, Valaṣokṣi-*

Devamandira, Prcchibrū-dakṣiṇeśvara, Kharjurikā-vihāra, Viṅvocā-Maṇḍapī, Poṇḍi-Maṇḍapī, Paṅ-kuṭī, Chuma-kuṭī, Ripsiṅ (canal), Salambū Rājavāsaka Maṇḍapī, etc, are indelible reminders of tribal-Hindu ethnic contacts. The numerous names of taxes, tax-offices, and corvee are non-Sanskrit. It is almost certain that the Licchavis promoted the wet rice culture sustained by means of artificial irrigation which they inherited from the tribals. At least, that much is clear from the survival of the Tibeto-Burman word *tilamaka* in the running Sanskrit texts of Licchavi epigraphy. More than 16 hillock names, some 35 names of rivers and water-sources, and above all, nearly 145 names of villages and settlements are all non-Sanskrit. Place-names, unlike personal names or surnames, have a high tenacity rate, and they do not change so easily. If we consider a place-name like *Khopa* (Newari name of Bhaktapur), we find that it goes back to some 1500 years—surviving all the social, cultural and political vicissitudes of a millennium and a half. The linguistic evidence of these typonyms cannot be dismissed so summarily as Regmi does. They almost irrefutably prove that the Licchavi society consists of a pyramid of tribal settlements and populations with a Hindu elite and the veneer of Sanskritic culture at the top.

As a practising historian, surely, Regmi knows that the clue of a single word has enabled archaeologists and historians and comparative linguists not only to reconstruct but actually dig up whole lost cultures and civilisations. What puzzles us, therefore, is Regmi's belaboured efforts to deny the palpable linguistic evidence of the tribal occupation of the Valley. It would be, of course, senseless to censure Regmi for not being a linguist or an anthropologist or an interdisciplinary historian: he never claimed to be any one of them.

Tribal Survival Amongst the Hiduised Newars: Post-Facto Evidence

Students of contemporary Newar society, particularly those who have a keen eye for 'living prehistory', have observed some interrelated aspects of Newar cultural and social system. Notable among these observations and findings are:

i. the edifice of Newar civilisation is erected on the ancient tribal substrata;[20]

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20 Slusser, 1982, pp. 9-11; Toffin, 1984, p. 587.

ii. the Newars were Indianised by succeeding ruling dynasties,[21] assimilating different ethnic elements into the fold of the caste system;[22]
iii. 'the Newar society of today is ultimately a descendant of the historical Licchavi society';[23] and
iv. 'The Kirāta, metamorphosed by millennia of miscegenation and acculturation, form the matrix of the Kathmandu Valley population, which in contemporary Nepal is designated Newar'.[24]

In Newar society, the tribal substrata have, fortunately not yet been completely submerged under the two millennia of Hindu superstrata deposited by the course of Nepalese social, political and cultural history. The Newari language, for instance, still retains 22 percent cognates with Tibetan, 28 percent with Chepang, and 24 percent with Tamang in the 100-word basic vocabulary. If we exclude the Deobhājus (Rājopādhyāya), the Shresthas are the most Hinduised of the Newar castes. Yet, among the Shresthas of Bhaktapur or Dhulikhel or Banepā there are numerous totemic clan names. Among the Bhaktapur Jyāpūs, the survival of totemism is strongest. Among tribal populations, social groups are distinguished on the analogy of natural species used as totemic names for such groups. Hypothetically, each group is responsible for the control of a species of plant or animal which it uses as its totem. The mark of tribal social organisation is strongest among the Jyāpūs where the traces of transition from totemic clan exogamy to caste endogamy are distinctly visible. The detribalisation of the Newars has been going on for the last 2000 years, yet today in Bhaktapur—the most Hinduised of Newar settlements—there are many totemic names used as caste labels, not only by the Jyāpūs, but also by the Shresthas.

Not only the Newar language and society, but also Newar forms of worship still retain strong tribal traits. Mostly, members of a Newar lineage have a common lineage or clan deity. Its annual worship is followed by a lineage feast. More often than not, what actually receives the worship are the numinous stones in anionic shapes, mostly located

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21 Slusser, 1982, pp. 9-14.
22 Toffin, 1984.
23 Sharma, 1983, p. 55.
24 Slusser, 1982, p. 11.

on the outskirts, fields, riversides and cremation grounds.[25] As an art-historian puts it,

> The shapes in which the Newars venerated their own divinities, which had preceded the gods of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal, sharply differed from the forms of the latter. Stones were venerated in their natural shapes, whether singly, piled in heaps under trees, raised on altars, or still in the ground below the surface of the earth...The numinous stones are formless and timeless.[26]

Not only were these stones *formless* and timeless: they were also *nameless* village—or river—gods until the arrival of the Hindu ideologues who never failed to invent names and legends to assimilate the pre-Hindu forms of worship into the fold of Hinduism.

The farmers (Jyāpūs) comprise nearly 45 per cent of the population of the village settlements in the Nepal Valley. Until recent years they used the *gubhāju (vajāacāaya)* as their healers-cum-priests to perform life-cycle rites and preside over the village festivals which were originally purely animistic—increasingly influenced by formal religions. To the villagers at large, the most powerful priest-cum-healer has always been the *gubhāju*.

Diffusion Pattern of Hinduism

According to Weber, the propagation of Hinduism occurs in approximately the following way:

> The ruling stratum of an 'animistic' or tribal territory begins to imitate specific Hindu customs... abstention from meat, particularly beef; the absolute *refusal* to butcher cows; total abstinence from intoxicating drinks,... gives up marriage practices that may deviate from Hindu custom and organises itself into exogamous sibs, forbidding marriage of their daughters to men of socially inferior strata...Some castes maintaining high standards have survivals of totemic organisation...The assumption of additional Hindu customs follows rapidly: restrictions are placed upon contact and table community; widows are forced into

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25 Vergati Stahl, 1979; Toffin, 1984.

26 Kramrisch, 1964, p. 16.

> celibacy; daughters are given into marriage before puberty without being asked; the dead are cremated rather than buried; ancestral death sacrifices *(sraddha)* are arranged; and the native deities are rebaptised with the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. Finally, tribal priests are eliminated and some Brahman is requested to provide and take charge of ritual concerns and thereby also to convince himself and provide testimony of the fact that they—the rulers of the tribe—were of ancient, only temporarily forgotten, knightly (*kshatriya*) blood. Or, under favourable circumstances, the tribal priests borrow the Brahman's way of life, acquire some knowledge of the Vedas, and maintain that they are themselves Brahmans of some Veda school and members of an ancient well-known Brahman sib *(gotra)* going back to such and such sage *(rishi)*...Pedigree, and the required origin-myth, possibly going back to epic or pre-epic times, are borrowed or simply invented, documented, and witnessed permitting the claim to the rank of Rajput (royal relationship, the present-day term for Kshatriya).[27]

The Licchavis promoted Hinduism *(varṇāśramadharma)* as the ideological basis for the organisation of society. The promotion of Hindu ethos is ultimately related to the economic differences in society and in particular to landed property. As Weber puts it, 'legitimation by a recognised religion has always been decisive for an alliance of politically and socially dominant classes and the priesthood'.[28] This is probably where the social, ideological, and political functions of inscriptions come. What else is Mānadeva's Cāṅgu panegyric or Jayadeva II's Paśupati panegyric if not the Hindu testimonial of 'the fact that they—the rulers of the tribe—were of ancient, only temporarily forgotten, knightly *(kshatriya)* blood'? These inscriptions are 'pedigree, (with) required origin-myth, possibly going back to epic or pre-epic times...invented, documented, and witnessed, permitting the claim to the rank of *Kshatriya*.' The inscriptions are the best testimonials of the values, beliefs, cults, pantheon, rituals, and, above all, ideology and institutions which were being promoted by the monarchy, the landed aristocracy, the trading community and the priesthood with economic support (land grant, rent in cash or in kind for temple rituals, maintenance of cult objects, and tax

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27 Weber, 1958, pp. 9-10.
28 Weber, 1958, p. 16.

concessions), and a certain amount of self-government to the village community. The inscriptions promoted Hindu ideology, i.e., the ideology of the trading classes which tried to legitimise themselves in terms of Hindu concept of a benevolent monarch of divine origin or charisma. What deserves a good deal of critical thought are the ideology of the inscriptions and the economics of the inscriptions.

The King was theoretically the owner of all land. He was the lord of all land *(bhūbhujā)*. He gave or granted land to his clients in return for their loyalty or service—moral, military or administrative. Private ownership over land had been in vogue in Licchavi Nepal for quite some time. Without private *ownership* of land there could have been no private *donations* or land grants for temple rituals, maintenance of cult objects or philanthropic establishments. Inscription Nos. 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19, 28, 30, 33, 34, 36, 45, 47, 48, 90, 112, 118, 120, 130, 131 and 141 show that the big land-holders in ancient Nepal were Brahmins, the members of the ruling nobility, and the merchants. Cult objects such as *liṅgas*, pious deeds such as water-tanks or water-conduits were backed by income from land in cash or kind. The King also granted land to institutions *(agrahāra)*, mainly to temples and monasteries as well as to holy men such as *Pāśupatācaryas*, or to offices *(adhikaraṇas)*, or for the maintenance of temples, their rituals and annual festivities. Above all, the King granted land to his kinsmen. Vasantadeva granted the village Jayapallikā to his sister Jayasundarī (Inscription No. 2). The grant entitled the princess not only to the income in royal share of crops, tax on agricultural goods and supplies, but also judicial and administrative control over the village community.

The nature of relationship between the Licchavi monarchy arid its clientele landholding classes, on the one hand, and their promotion of Hindu ethos to legitimise this alliance culturally, on the other, are the fundamental clues to a *historical interpretation* of the ancient inscriptions of Nepal. Income from land and property relations in land were not the only economic bases of the diffusion and promotion of Hindu religion and culture. The king and his clientele also gave other economic incentives, particularly tax exemptions, creating rent- or tax-free privileged village communities *(koṭṭamaryādā)*, where the tax-collecting offices *(adhikaraṇas)*, officers *(adhikkṛtas)* and the ubiquitous footloose *cāta* and *bhaṭa* were prohibited from entering. Such grants became the style of royal favour with Gaṇadeva (AD 560-565) and a universal practice since Sivadeva

Aṃśuvarmā (AD 590-621) when the Hinduisation of the tribal populations became a matter of conscious state policy. In addition to these economic concessions, more and more powers and authority were devolved upon the village community—leaving the villagers undisturbed with their customary practices. The transition from tribal village councils with their headmen or chiefs to Hindu norms and structures such as *pradhāna, pratihāra, dauvārika, pāúcālī* and *gosṭhis* may have been less painful because of such a 'liberal' policy at the grassroots. Thus, the assimilation of tribals into the Hindu fold was facilitated by the policy of social, economic and administrative incentives and concessions.

Hindu Ideology and Social Stratification

'The entire course of Indian history', according to Kosambi, 'shows tribal elements being fused into a general society. This phenomenon, which lies at the very foundation of the most striking Indian social feature, namely caste, is also the great basic fact of ancient Indian history. The different methods whereby the tribal elements were formed into a society or absorbed into preexisting society are prime ethnic material for any real historian'.[29] In inscription after inscription, the ruling monarchs of ancient Nepal—from Mānadeva I to Jayadeva II—are seen championing, not only the Hindu cults and rituals, but also the Hindu caste system. For example, Mānadeva I is described by a donor of a water-conduit in Kela Tole, Kathmandu as 'the protector of the earth, one who loves his subjects like the father, and rules according to the tenets of the Vedas and scriptures'. The King describes himself as 'the one who had received the baptism of the *Kṣatriya* in the practice of battles'. His grandson, Vasantadeva uses *paramadaivata* (great god) as a royal title. Similarly, Anuparam's hymn to Veda Vyāsa (Inscription No. 27) shows the vehemence of feelings against the opponents of Vedic Hinduism (i.e., the caste system), and calls the Buddhists *kutarkkika* (atheists or ill-intentioned logicians). While right from the beginning of the Licchavi records all the pious deeds of the big land-holding classes—brahmans, *kṣatriyas,* and *sārthavāhas*—appear to show the increasing hold of Hindu cultural norms and religious ideals, since Gaṇadeva (AD 560-565), the King appears to adopt a conscious policy of economic incentives to bring outlying tribal village communities in

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29 Kosambi, 1975, p. 27.

the general fold of Hindu social and political order (see Inscriptions 38-43). Sivadeva I and more so Aṃśuvarmā follows on Gaṇadeva's footsteps. The largest number of royal charters come from Sivadeva I (6), Sivadeva-Aṃāvarma (12), and Aṃśuvarmā (24). Some are marvellously well-preserved (Nos. 63, 64 and 65). To the economic incentives of tax reduction, Aṃsuvarmā adds the policy of increasing self-government to village councils and encouragement of long-distance trade through excise and customs exemption, and stimulus for livestock farming through tax reduction. 'The net result of these policies had been a shift in the economy, of which there are numerous traces in the inscriptions of the Sivadeva-Aṃśuvarmā age. One of these is the rise of the urban nuclei or marts as a result of the consolidation of pre-existing villages and scattered settlements. The word *draṅga* (if it really means a township, rather than a mere watch-post or customs-collection post) occurs in an inscription of Sivadeva (No. 49) for the first time. Secondly, the inscriptions begin to mention tax and grant figures in monetary units. These economic changes seemed to indicate diversification of economic activities and occupations and consequent social changes. The most important of the indicators is the reference to *dharmaśaṅkara*, i.e., changing one's ascribed profession or occupation at will. The pursuit of one's ascribed occupation was regarded by Hindu lawgivers such as Manu, Kautalya or Sukrācarya as the bedrock of the caste system. So abandoning one's ascribed profession was strictly prohibited, and the cases of *dharmaśaṅkara* or change of profession were looked into directly by the King. By Aṃśuvarmā's time there was already a kind of religious court of the learned brahmans *(bhaṭṭādhikaraṇa)* to look into such cases of violations of caste norms. No wonder that Aṃśuvarmā styles himself as 'the high feudatory Aṃśuvarmā, with his fame spread all over the world like a bridge of the unviolated propriety *(āryanaryādā)*', i.e., the caste system. This phraseology, of course, is not unfamiliar to students of Indian epigraphy where the most distinguished rulers of the Gupta period claimed to be 'employed in settling the system of castes and orders' and 'in keeping the castes confined to their respective spheres of duty'.[30] A graphic example of the ancient social stratification expressed in terms of status symbols, comes from an inscription (No. 108), issued by Bhīmārjunadeva (Licchavi) and Viṣṇugupta (ābīira) in AD 640. Being

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30 Majumdar, Raychudhuri and Dutta, 1978, p. 138.

pleased at the porterage services rendered to the King by the Kolis (low-caste peasants) of the Southern Koligrāma (Southern Kathmandu), the King permits the inhabitants of the village, as an additional royal favour, to wear all ornaments *other than* anklets and bracelets, presumably used only by the privileged castes.

If we scrutinise the names of deities worshipped and patronised by the royalty or the landed classes we find them mainly Hindu (śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and śakta), and Buddhist (No. 74). Almost all the rituals *(yātrās, padma pūjā, varṣavardhana, karaṇa pūjā or naimittaka pūjā)* are Hindu; almost all cult-objects *(liṅgas, icons, sculptures, bronze or repousse works)* are Hindu, with a few Buddhist exceptions. Almost all pious deeds (construction, maintenance, and repair of water-tanks, wells, and water-conduits) are inspired by Hindu religious ideals of *puṇya* (virtue/merit), which are all invariably sponsored by the big landowners, no matter whether they are Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas or Sārthavāhas. During the rule of Narendradeva (No. 129), we come across a minister in charge of religious affiars *(dharmarājikāmātya)*. Sivadeva II's inscriptions (Not 133 and 136), dated AD 697 and AD 705, claim that the King was 'the banner of the Licchavi dynasty who thoroughly imposed the caste system'. The alliance of politically and socially dominant classes who owned landed property is legitimised by the priesthood with the aid of a recognised religion. Hindu ideology i.e., the caste system, was an eloquent expression of 'the ideas of dominance' of the classes with landed property.

The Licchavi Clan-Charisma

Not long ago, the Khas-Magars who came to political power after the Kot Massacre of 1846 laid a claim to Kṣatriya descent. The Brahmans invented a pedigree and genealogy connecting Jang Bahadur Kuwar's ancestors with the Ranas of Udyapur, and Jang's family succeeded in marrying into the Thakuri ruling family. Since then, all the tribals have been making social claims to Kṣatriya descent. The Gurungs in the l920s made similar claims but did not succeed; the Thakalis continue to make such claims, particularly the affluent ones;[31] the Limbus make the same claims;[32] the Rais have recently made similar claims.[33] The Chepangs

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31 Fürer-Haimendorf, 1956.

32 Limbu, 1954; Chemjong, 1967.

33 *Kirāteśvarasandeśa*, 1985.

and the Tharus have origin-myths connecting these tribes with Hindu epics. These social aspirations of the tribal populations of Nepal are indicators of growing penetration and diffusion of Hindu norms and ideology. Students of South Asian societies have tried to analyse this social-cultural process within the theoretical paradigm of 'Sanskritisation' or 'Hinduisation', or similar terms. The fundamental facts of the process are: 1) claims of the ruling elite of the tribe to noble descent; 2) adoption of Hindu caste norms and rituals as well as Hindu pantheon and forms of worship by the tribal elites, and 3) subsequent de-tribalisation of the social structure and culture.

The fundamental weakness in Regmi's approach to Nepal's ancient epigraphic data lies in his failure to analyse and interpret the data in the light of the socio-cultural process of Hinduisation of what was basically a tribal society. Between 'Licchavi'—the eponymic founder of the ruling dynasty of ancient Nepal and the first historical king, Vṛṣadeva (ca. AD 350-390), there were allegedly 50 kings, and even in the official genealogy of Jayadeva II, 48 of them were unnamed. Even by conservative estimates, between the Licchavi and Vṛṣadeva there may be a gap of nearly a millennium. This is too long a gap for any surviving human group to preserve the memory of its ancestral founder. Regmi thinks that Sivadeva I (AD 590-604) was the first one who 'suddenly appears with the epithet', 'banner of the Licchavi family' and 'this might arouse suspicion'.

> No king had yet called themselves *Licchavikulaketu*...an epithet which came to be adopted by kings after him. Thus Udayadeva, Dhruvadeva, and Udayadeve's son (Narendradeva) and grandson (Jayadeva II) called themselves the banner of the Licchavi family.[34]

Mānadeva I's daughter, Vijayāvatī, born of Queen Bhoginī, calls her late father 'the full moon in the firmament of the Licchavi family' (Inscription No. 18). Though neither Mānadeva calls I nor any of his successors upto Sivadeva I claims Licchavi descent, Regmi has asked the right question in a wrong wording when he writes:

> Why Mānadeva's daughter betrayed her anxiety to connect Mānadeva with the Licchavi dynasty is certainly a puzzle in this background.[35]

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34 Regmi, 1983, p. 101.
35 Regmi, 1983, p. 39.

The question is more complicated than the personal anxiety of a princess who should not, ordinarily, have bothered about such questions of social history. The time-distance between Mānadeva I's great-grandfather, Vṛiṣaadeva, and the eponymic founder of the Licchavi dynasty is at least 1000 years. In between only two kings, Supuspa and Jayadeva I, are remembered by name. All this might 'arouse suspicion'—as Regmi puts it. Undercutting the poetic camouflage, Jayadeva II's Paśupati panegyric betrays what might have been a historical fact. In the inscription there is nothing about the emigration of the Licchavis from Vaiśāli (after its annexation by Ajātaśatru), nor is there anything about the emigration or conquest of Nepal by the Licchavis (after the rise of the Guptas in Magadha). Jayadeva II's genealogy does not connect his family with the Ḷicchavis of Vaisāli or Magadha, nor does it contain a word about the migration to or conquest of Nepal by the Licchavis. On the contrary, all that the genealogy claims is to equate the eponym *Licchavi* with the *Solar dynasty*. Unfortunately, Regmi's translation of verse 6 of the inscription fails to bring out this equation eloquently:

> Like a mark on the forehead of the globe, trusted by his people, *belonging to the famous and great solar dynasty*, enjoying great influence and worthy of respect even by great Gods, he bears *the pure name Licchavi, giving rise to a new dynasty*, white like the beautiful moon, and similar to Ganga's flood, majestic in appearance and charming.[36]

Various historical dynasties of South Asian monarchies had resorted to the origin-myth of solar descent, but the question is: why did Jayadeva II or his ancestors resort to the Licchavi name? The ruling elites in Nepal have almost invariably imitated, not only the political style and idiom of their Indian contemporaries, but also their assumed family name or surname: the Licchavis were influenced by the Guptas; the Thakuris, by the Vardhanas, the Varmans, and the Pāla-Senas; the Mallas, by the Karṇāṭas and Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa; the Shāha-Rāṇās by the Moghuls and the Delhi Sultānate. In the 4th-6th century India, when the imperial Guptas were in the height of their power, Chandragupta I (ca. 320-340) issued a unique coin-type with the royal couple standing on the obverse, the Queen, Kumāradevī (a Licchavi princess), to the King's right, with

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36 Regmi, 1953, II, p. 91.

names of the royal couple inscribed, and the reverse bearing the legend *licchavaya* (the Licchavis, in plural), possibly to celebrate the important political benefits of the Gupta-Licchavi entente. Instead of the name of any king, the Licchavis were mentioned in plural. This may give some ground to believe that although Ajātaśatru annexed Vaiśāli to the Magadhan Kingdom (in ca. 481 B.C.), the Licchavis continued to remain, a republican people right up to the days of Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta I married a daughter of the Licchavi, named Kumāradevī, who gave birth to Samudragupta (341-380). Samudragupta proudly claimed to be *Licchavi-dauhitra* (son of the daughter of the Licchavi). That Samudragupta should have used his mother's patrilineage or matronymic *Licchavi-dauhitra,* in defiance of Mantis (X: 22) classification of the Licchavis as *vrātyas* (the fallen ones), is indicative of the fact that in 4th-century Magadha, *Licchavi* was a name more esteemed by society than the name *Gupta.* The Guptas acquired great social prestige by matrimonial relation with the ancient Kṣatriya clan of the Licchavis, and naturally they proclaimed the fact in all royal deeds, Samudragupta's posthumous Allahabad pillar panegyric (composed by the court-poet Hariṣeṇa) lists the contemporary king of Nepal (Vṛṣadeva?) among one of the five border rulers who 'paid tribute to the Emperor and came to prostrate before him at his command'. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that the King of Nepal in AD 341-380 was a Licchavi. The Gupta Emperor who took such pride in claiming to be the grandson of Licchavi would not have mentioned that the King of Nepal 'came to prostrate before him at his command', had the Nepalese King or feudatory been a Licchavi himself. Once they had consolidated political power in the Nepal Valley the kinsmen of Mānadeva I or Jayadeva II may have used the term *Licchavi* to stake the usual claim to solar descent. During the height of the Gupta Empire, the Nepalese riding elites were clearly feudatories bordering the Empire. After Skaṇḍagupta's death in AD 467, the Empire begins to decline until it broke down under the onslaught of the Hūṇas. The feudatories in Nepal began to project themselves in larger social, political, and cultural profile soon after the death of Skaṇḍagupta. Once again, Regmi's treatment of 'the Licchavi problem' is at best unilluminating:

> If the Gupta Emperors take pride in their relations with the Licchavis, the latter must have been really a distinguished royal family or race. But we are not told as to where they lived. It is possible that about the time

> of Chandragupta I the ruling family had migrated to Nepal. For we do not hear anything about them in Indian records since then.[37]

The crux of the Licchavi question in ancient Nepalese history is: *why* did such a distinguished or illustrious royal family, race or clan, have to migrate from the heartland of contemporary Indian civilisation and culture to the Nepal Valley—a tribal periphery and hideout? Regmi's answer is:

> The Vrjjikas, probably a collective name for the Licchavis and others in the area, might have migrated in times of stress being under attack by outside elements.[38]

On this question, Nepali historians are unilluminating. Jha wrote that

> Under the leadership of Supuspa the Licchavis migrated to Nepal only after the Guptas occupied the throne of Magadha (mainly because of the dreadful betrayal of Chandragupta).[39]

However, he did not produce any evidence for his speculation. J.C. Regmi argued that the Licchavis of Nepal were the surviving members of the ancient Vṛji republic of Vaiśālī and that they emigrated to Nepal soon after Ajātaśatru absorbed the republic of Vaiśāīi in the Magadhan Empire in 481 BC.[40] He is not alone to hold this view. Mishra[41] and Basham, too, are of the same view:

> (After the betrayal of Vaisali by the Sage Kulavalaya) Cedaga (the leader of the Licchavis) committed suicide by drowning and the Licchavis emigrated to Nepal.[42]

None of the sources used or referred to by J.C. Regmi, Mishra and Basham mentions the emigration of the Licchavis to Nepal. The Pali canonical

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37 Regmi, 1933, p. 192.
38 Regmi, 1983, p. 191.
39 Jha, 1970, p. 107.
40 J.C. Regmi, 1978, pp. 30-31.
41 Mishra, 1962, pp. 261-262.
42 Basham, 1951, p. 69.

texts of Jainism such as *Avaśyaka-sūtra*, referred to by the above authorities, have nothing on the migration of the Licchavis to Nepal. Nor has *Mahāpariṇirvāṇa sūtra* of the *Dighanikāya*, a text which had already been translated into Chinese by AD 306. The Pali Buddhist canonical text, together with Buddhaghosa's (AD 420) commentary, *Sumaṅgalavilāśinī*, narrates in detail the Campaign of Ajātaśatru against the Licchavis. In none of these texts is there even a remote reference to the migration of Licchavis to Nepal. There are, therefore, two possibilities:

i. Once they were secure in power, the Indo-Aryan immigrants who came to the Nepal Valley in the early centuries AD, started to claim 'Licchavi' descent. As Regmi puts it, 'Nepal received a large scale migration from the Tarai belt in the south and this migration was mainly responsible for the creation of a degree of culture that was in evidence from the 4th-10th centuries AD.'[43]
ii. The tribal chieftains of Nepal were inventing 'testimony of the fuel that they—the rulers of the tribe—were of ancient, only temporarily forgotten knightly (kshatriya) blood', and the term Licchavi, like Malla, Shaha, or Rana, was a convenient contemporary synonym of such noble descent and clan-charisma.

These hypotheses assume some relevance if we remember that no ruling Nepalese monarch following Jyadeva II (AD 733) claims to have been a Licchavi. The name obviously had lost its political relevance since the fall of the later Guptas, particularly since the receding of the successors of Adityasena (AD 673), whose grand-daughter *(dauhitri)* was Jayadeva II's mother, Vatsadevī.

Settlements

The Licchavis were elevated chieftains ruling over clusters of sparsely populated farming villages with irrigated fields—slowly nucleating as urban settlements over centuries. These peasant villages, some 140 or so are known by non-Sanskrit names, drew sustenance from wet rice cultivation and animal husbandry (rearing sheep, buffalo, poultry and pigs, among other animals). The material growth of these settlements

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43 Regmi, 1983, p. 191.

was boosted by entrepot trade, particularly with the opening of the Kuti and Kyi-rong passes in the ca. 7th century AD. Thānkot, Tistung, Pharping and Lele were on the trade route to India; the settlements of Nuwākot, Kewalpur and Gorkhā were on the route to the Kyi-rong pass; Sāṅgā, Nālā, Banepā, Khopāsi, Palāúchok, and Dumjā were on the route to the Kuti pass. The major spillover of the settlements outside of the Valley began only with the growth of the entrepot trade.

The inscriptions invariably refer to the settlements as *grāma* or *grāmapradeśa*. Only after Sivadeva I in ca. AD 596, we hear of *draṅga*, a word which has been variously interpreted by the authorities. For instance, Maity defines it as a township; Monier-Williams, as a city; Sircar, as 'a station for revenue collection, a watch station or a town'. On scrutinising Nepalese inscriptions, one is inclined to call a *draṅga* merely 'the marketplace with a customs house' rather than a full-fledged township, or town, let alone a city.[44] In all Licchavi records we know only nine of them by name. The area from Naxāl to Devpāṭan—the main artery of India-Tibet entrepot trade-route—had already been developed into a cluster of urban trade-marts by the 8th century AD. The townships of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur were 'formed by the assemblage of several villages, progressively enlarged and brought closer to one another until they mingled into one another'.[45] 'The rise of actual towns and of urban life was a late development. It was due, as suggested by Lévi, to a shift in the economy of Nepal from a purely agricultural to a mixed one, in which trade and crafts played an increasing role.'[46]

The Rise of the Merchants

In a study of the material bases of the transition from prehistory to history, a century ago Engels wrote:

> The stage of commodity production with which civilisation begins is distinguished economically by the introduction of: 1) metal money, and with it money capital, interest and usury; 2) merchants as a class of intermediaries between producers; 3) private ownership of land and the mortgage system; 4) slave labour as a dominant form of production.[47]

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44 See Vajācārya, 1973, pp. 218-222; Regmi, 1983, p. 100.
45 Lévi, 1905, II, pp. 185-186.
46 Petech, 1984, p. 184.
47 Engels, 1884, p. 172.

Though slaves were used in temples and households, the ancient inscriptions of Nepal do not lend any conclusive evidence in support of the use of slave labour in economic production. But the evidence for the other three economic innovations, leading to the advent of civilisation, are not only abundant but palpable. As soon as we begin to have historical documents we have almost simultaneously all three of them at work to revolutionise the whole hitherto-existing tribal society. It is perhaps no accident that like other historical evidence, metal coinage begins in ancient Nepal with Mānadeva I. Nor is it likely to be an accident that we hear of big landowning leaders of the caravans of long-distance traders *(sārthavāha)* donating enormous landed property to śaiva cult objects or Sun god (Inscriptions Nos. 8, 9 and 10). The two aspects of these donations are remarkable in: a) the size and number of landholdings which were donated; and b) their locations. The size differs from 30 to 600 land-measurement units; whereas the locations of the holdings of Sārthavāha Ratnasangha, for example, are spread from Praṅpriṅ (Pharping), Sīāttikā (Sitāpāila), Yūpagrāma (Patan), Khinaspu (Khandpu) to Khopriṅ (Bhaktapur). Without a shade of doubt, Ratnasangha belonged to the new aristocracy of wealth, visible mainly in the form of private property in land. He belonged to a new intermediary class of merchants which made its fortune out of the long-distance trans-Himalayan entrepot trade.

Although we have documentary evidence of these long-distance traders only after AD 477-480, the Nepal valley had long been in the trade-map of the Indian classics as early as the 4th century BC. Among the objects worth collecting in the royal stock, Kautalya mentions the black woollen blanket named *bhingisi* (cf. Newari, *bhingu*, excellent, of good quality; *si*, textile, fabric, cloth) and *apasārikā* (II. 11. 29), which were made in Nepal. In an early Buddhist *vinaya*-text, the caravan leaders from Srāvasti go to Nepal to bring back with them wool, orpiment, wood in large quantities 'loaded in their carts'[48]. Hsuan Tsang (AD 634) notes that Nepal 'produces red copper, the Yak and the Mingming bird (jivanjiva). In commerce they use coins made of red copper favourable for the production of grains and abounds in flowers and fruits, also copper, yaks and birds named ming-ming *(jivamjiva)*. In commerce, copper coin is used'.[49] The Old T'ang Annals relates that.

48 Lévi, 1908, III, p. 183.
49 Xuanzang, 1906, p. 81.

> The merchants there, moving and stationary, are numerous; cultivators rare. They have coins of copper which bear on one side a figure of man and on the reverse a horse (New Tang Annals—on the reverse a horse and a bull, and which has no hole in the middle). They do not pierce the noses of their bulls (New Tang Annals—they do not know how to plough the earth with the bulls).[50]

The internal evidence of the inscriptions also shows that Nepal exported copper-utensils, deer-skin, musk, yak-tails, iron, among several other things (Inscription Nos. 70 and 71). Some of the herbs, vegetables and minerals are so closely associated with the name of Nepal and its people that they are known in the Indian texts as *Naipāla, Napālikam* and *Kirātātikta* etc. We have also epigraphic evidence for the fact that villagers of south Kathmandu were required to do compulsory porterage for the State or private lords or merchants trading with Tibet *(bhoṭṭaviṭṣṭī)* (Inscription No. 132). The small trickle of men and materials through the Himalayan passes engaged in barter trade of salt and grains may have suddenly undergone a sea-change once the Banepā-Kuti route to Tibet was discovered by the Chinese Buddhist monk Hsuan Chao in AD 639. Thus, already by AD 643-651, merchants—both moving and stationary—were numerous. At home, the feudal lords exchanged the surplus rains and goods they appropriated as rent for luxuries or for goods and services of the craftsmen they patronised. It was the confluence of the economic interests and activities of the merchants, the feudal lords living close to the Court, and the craftsmen which laid the foundations for the growth of urban nuclei in the Valley. Once the class of merchants emerges, a fundamental cleavage takes place in a society—the cleavage between production and consumption—between production for home and production for market. With this 'breach at the heart of society',

> the merchant took care to make it plain that all commodities, and hence all commodity producers, must grovel in the dust before money. In his hands the cult of money was sale...Never again has the power of money revealed itself with such primitive crudity and violence as it did in this period of its youth.[51]

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50 Lévi, 1905, II, pp. 164-165.
51 Engels, 1884, p. 163.

The Implications of Metal Money

The circulation of metal money is of fundamental significance for the study of the social history of ancient Nepal. Minted coins appear in ancient Nepal simultaneously with other historical evidence such as inscriptions and art objects. There is no explicit discussion in the literature on the technology of making coins in ancient Nepal. However, on a close study of the embossed area, shapes, and sizes of the available Licchavi coins in private collections, including mine, there is hardly any doubt that the ancient copper coins were made with the help of embossing dies used manually, somewhat like modern post-marks on molten pieces or sheets of copper. There are eight main types of coins in circulation at various times in ancient Nepal. They vary a great deal in size, weight-standard, style, iconography and workmanship in particular. However, the astonishing quality of finish and realism of the embossed animal-symbols of the winged lion in Mānāṅka, the cow in Vaiśravaṇa, the elephant in Guṇāṅka, and above all the horse in Jiṣṇugupta's coins can compare with the finest specimens of coins in India. The following are the summarised details of the ancient coins, their eight main types and nearly 60 sub-varieties, issued between AD 464-ca. AD 879:

Type	No of Sub-varieties	Size	Weight
Mānāṅa/Sri Bhoginī	10	2.35-2.80 cm	12.64-14.46 gms
Vaiśravaṇn,/Kāmadohī	2	2.55	12.43-12.82
śṛyāmśū/Kāadohī	9	2.35-2.55	10.62-11.85
Mahārājadhirājasya/śryāṃśoḥ	1	2.54	13.48-16.28
Jiṣṇguptasya	2	2.45	10.56-10.73
Guṇaāṅka	9	2.20-2.40	a. 10.95-12.65 b. 9.90-7.90
Paśupati	20	2.15-2.35	3.0-9.90
Vrsa	6	1.35-1.60	2.00-3.00

Experts are undecided in their opinions as to whether the Licchavi coins are modeled on the Kuṣāṇa or the Gupta or the Yaudheya tribal coins. There are several unattended problems relating to the coinage in ancient Nepal. In the first place, there is the problem of chronology and attribution of Vaiśravaṇa, Guṇāṅka, Paśupati and Vṛṣa coin-types. To establish their authorship and chronology, they have no infallible clue other than

iconography, palaeography and the statistical average of weight-size standards. Secondly, there is the problem of fractional coin: were there coins of different fractions, or was there only one denomination copper (tainrika) *paṇa*? The inscriptions refer to *paṇa, kārṣāpaṇa, [i.e, 16 paṇa] purāṇa* and *paṇapurāṇa,* with, no indications as to weight, value or mutual ratios. Thirdly, was the standard monometallic (copper only), or was it bimetallic (silver *purāṇa* and copper *paṇa*)? No ancient silver coin has so far been found in Nepal: nor do the Chinese notices refer to the existence of any silver coins in Nepal. Fourthly, why do the average weight-standards vary from type to type, or between sub-varieties of a type? The drastic weight variations are certainly not the effect of circulation alone. Fifthly, are the sub-varieties only iconographic or denominational/fractional as well?

If we subscribe to MacDowell's hypothesis that the earlier the coin the greater is its weight,[52] we have only one anomaly, i.e., *Mahārājdhirājasya*/sṛyāṃśoḥ, with the highest metal content of 14-16 gms. The coin may have been a coronation commemorative issue. The differences in average weight between two groups of the Guṅāṇka coins are 'far too heavy to be a frictional denomination and is clearly a result of a deliberate reduction in the weight standard. Coins with the name of Paśupati range from 3.10 gms; but even in this group all coins seem to have been intended as a single denomination, and not as fractional'.[53] What may have been, then, the reason for these 'deliberate reductions in weight standards'? Some scholars argue, most plausibly, that these reductions in the weight of metal content was 'to adjust the trade and commerce relations'.[54] However, there is no doubt that the bulk of ancient Nepalese coin-types belongs to the eventful century between Aṃśuvarmā and Narendradeva (AD 604-679).

What coins we have are a great asset to the study of ancient Nepalese society, particularly in view of the general paucity of coins in our history, and a near complete scarcity of coinage between Paśupati coins and Sivadeva III (AD 1098-1126), or between Sivadeva III and Mahendra Malla (AD 1560- 1574). Despite the fact that coinage is a fundamentally important source of ancient Nepalese social and economic history,

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52 MacDowell, 1959.

53 MacDowell, 1959, p. 39.

54 T.P. Varma, 1973, p. XIX, in the introduction to the Indian reprint of Walsh, 1908.

historians such as Regmi have given little attention to its scientific study; and there is no publication by any Nepali other than Hari Ram Joshi's unevenly written and documented Nepali publication.[55] To keep referring to the dated papers and publications of the 1890s and 1910s when there are numerous private collections of ancient coins in Nepal, right at the historian's door-step, as it were, is a typical instance of our unwillingness to study the historical evidence first hand.

If during the period of its youth the cult of money was marked by 'primitive crudity and violence', could it be an accident that among the symbols used in the coins of ancient Nepal we have Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, Kuvera/Vaiśavaṇa, the god of wealth, and Kāmadohī, the cow of plenty, yielding all human desires?

Slavery

Slavery in ancient India was less severe and exploitative, and more patriarchal and proximate to hired labour and men 'working off' fines or debts. The evidence for slavery in ancient Nepalese society is disputable. Vajācārya thinks that the only evidence available refers to temple maids and attendants.[56] Elsewhere the reference to slavery is merely allegorical. He believes that slavery existed in ancient society in a mild form, mainly in the form of compulsory labour. Regmi disputes the contention that 'slavery had become a part of the society' and calls Vajācārya's view 'a hypothetical observation'. Then he goes on, in his usual fashion, to refer to the Hindu *dharmasastra* literature (Yājúavalkya, Manu, Naārada and Kauṭalya) on the classifications, status and duties of the slaves, but says nothing on whether they played any role in ancient Nepalese society, particularly in economic production as they did in classical antiquity. Regmi denies the existence of slaves in ancient Nepal, because not only does he misread a crucial piece of evidence, but mutilates its social content by misleading translation. All this will be obvious if we compare the following with what Regmi wrote in his Vol I, 126 and Vol II: 78:

6. ...cāṭabhaṭanāmapraveśyena śarīrakoṭṭamaryādopapannah sarīrasarvakaranīyapra (ti)

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55 Hari Ram Joshi, 1976.
56 Vajācārya, 1973, pp. 3-4.

> 7. muktaḥ kutumbīḥ bahiradeśagamanādisarvaviṣṭirahito...[57]
> (The village is granted the status and dignity of a fortified [i.e.. privileged] settlement, exempted from the entry of the tax-collectors, and the heads of the farming families are exempted from corporal services including all compulsory porterage to accompany [the lords] on their journey abroad.) (author's translation)

Regmi believes that the exempted corporal services are 'only a form of forced labour arising out of the obligation to keep the dignity of the strong fort'.[58] On the contrary, Sharma suggests that 'like corvee, slavery too was part and parcel of the Licchavi land-based society, although we are unable to discover all its forms.'[59] So the question for future research is *not* whether slavery existed, but what *role* the slaves played in the economy and society of Licchavi Nepal.

The Illusion of the Epoch

The social relations of commodity production—the emergence of metal money, the merchant class, slavery and private ownership of land—were slowly impinging upon the consciousness of the ruling elites in ancient Nepal. We have some evidence in extant inscriptions. Here are three eloquent ones:

> In the deep darkness wholly engrossed by evil thoughts, different kinds of evil spirits cross the hell, but people are not devoted to you (śiva) and they do not pray, and they are to undergo ever and ever the suffering arising out of birth, death, and disease and other serious calamities. King Mānadeva prays that the merits obtained through the act of setting up your sacred *liṅga* would ultimately go to uproot the sorrows and malodies of all the world including mine Own. (Inscription No. 6)

Here is a Buddhist lady donating land to feed the members of the Saṅgha and to worship the Buddha:

> I perform this meritorious duty with a feeling of distress at my being born a woman and to be released from womanhood to become a male.

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57 Vajācārya, 1973, p. 496.
58 Regmi, 1983, III, p. 214.
59 Sharma, 1983, p. 38.

> My desire today being that I will have no longer to bear the sufferings of a woman. (Inscription No. 12)

Finally here is a Vaṣṇava pundit, Anuparam, offering high-flown praise to Dvaipāyana (Veda Vyāsa)—the mythical composer of the Vedas, the Mahābharata, and the purāṇas, now repudiated by those 'with bad thought, bad conduct, and false logicians, and—the disciples of the Sugata (the Buddha)':

> Smrtis, coming out of Srutis are no more checked in this world today. This was the method adopted (in the past): but today it is destroyed; (Verse 36)
>
> Men revolve on the sea of life; they are chased by passions; and they fall in deep illusion;... the path of salvation you have shown them in this earth you have also dealt with the crooked distorters in this world.. For the good of the world you have exposed to view (Mahā) Bhārata, oh, doer of good, all the learning of this world. (Verses: 45-52) (Inscription No. 27)

Lévi remarked that 'this hymn addressed to Dvaipāyana towards the end of the VI century in the bosom of the Himalayas surprises one by its singular character' because 'the Nepalese poet, or at least the client who pays for his services, does not address Dvaipāyana in disinterested homage. It is a son who desires the success of his father and who asks to this effect the efficacious protection of the epic bard...We shall never know *what* kind of help was expected of the sage Vyāsa for the success of Anuparam's father.'[60] The unique character of this hymn ties precisely in the *ambiguity* of its worldly content whereas the intensity of its transcendental feelings is quite *transparent*.

There are different plausible and tempting interpretations of the hymn, particularly to treat it as a mere literary *tour de force*. One can read here the conventional filial piety of a son for his parents, not too different from Mānadeva's for his mother or Jayadeva II's for his. Several contemporary inscriptions attest to such transfer of merit to the donor's kith and kin. What is striking here is that Anuparam has not offered anything material (no icon, no land endowment) other than the verbal

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60 Lévi, 1908, p. 30.

artefact. It may, therefore, not be a commonplace offering out of filial piety, and Anuparam was no commoner. As Anuparam's family—the Guptas—had a chequered political career starting with the rise of Ravigupta in AD 513 to the death of Viṣṇugupta in AD 641, one may be tempted to read a remote echo of the changing political fortunes of the family in Anuparam's hymn to Dvaipāyana.

Anuparam (died ca. AD 540) belonged to a most distinguished family of the Guptas which supplied the chief executives of the country for more than a century. Paramābhimāni/Ravigupta (AD 513-532[?]) was his father; Bhaumagapta (AD 551-590) was his son; Viṣṇugupta (AD 624-633) was his great-grandson, and Viṣṇugupta (634-641), his great grandson's son. Regmi reads Anuparam merely as an orthodox Hindu revivalist 'invocation to Vyāsa for deliverance to counteract the growing influence of Buddhism'.[61] The fling against Buddhism is understandable, not only because the Buddha preached against the caste system (in *Ambaṭṭha sūtta*), against animal sacrifice (in *Kūṭadanta sūtta)* and against the Vedas (in *Jevijja sūṭta),* but also because Buddhism as a religion had been patronised either by unorthodox kings or by the rising merchant class. Vṛṣadeva, a Nepalese king who may have ruled two centuries before Anuparam, was described even in an official genealogy as 'a partisan of the rule of the Sugata', i.e., the Buddha.

In all likelihood, Anuparam was a brilliant representative, an ancient instance of the active ideologists who made the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief occupation. The mystification of social realities begins when ideologues start removing from social beings and things the reality that belongs to them and confer upon abstractions. As a true representative of his class, Anuparam may be imposing on the world the categories of thought and feeling derived from *his* social position. The Vaiṣṇava poet's lament at the decline of the precepts and norms enjoined by the Hindu scriptures would thus be ultimately the menial reflex of a society in transition—already under the grip of the cult of money, gradually undermining the traditional landed aristocracy.

> When men invented money, they did not realise that they were again creating a new social power, the one general power before which the whole society must bow. And it was this new power, suddenly sprung

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61 Regmi, 1983, pp. 71-12.

> to life *without the knowledge or will of its creators,* which now, in the full brutality of its youth, gave (the Athenians) the first taste of its might.[62]

It is worth remembering that some ideologues in each phase of man's history tend to regard the established order as a product, not of history, but of an eternal scheme of things. In the idiom of their age, King Mānadeva I, the Buddhist lady unwilling to be re-born a woman, and the Vaiṣṇava poet Anuparam were each merely sharing the fundamental illusion of their epoch—the epoch of the advent of metal money, the merchant class, private ownership of land and slaves.

In order to understand the ancient inscriptions of Nepal the first step is to penetrate the textual surface and verbal artefact, inlaid with the mystification of social and economic realities—which is not possible if our focus is only on words—as Regmi's obviously is, rather than on the social content and relations. We do not yet know enough about ancient Nepalese society to be too categorical about its structure and foundations. What we know are mainly from the inscriptions, supplemented by the coins, a few dozen sculptures, sundry archaeological remains and the Chinese notices. The recent works of Slusser and Toffin have added much to our limited knowledge of the culture, religion and social structure of the Valley, with insights gained from different social sciences.[63] Some of the recent examples of how the study of urban space and rituals[64] or the study of rituals and festivals[65] can illuminate the past and supplement the study of written sources are provided by the work of the unorthodox German 'Indologists'— unbelievably willing to go beyond the written texts and observe living history at first hand. If history is a hypothetical reconstruction of the past on the basis of inherently limited materials—written or otherwise—without going beyond the written facts, interpretation of their context is rarely possible. The inscriptions of ancient Nepal which number less than two hundred to cover a time-span of some four centuries, are by their very nature a partial source of information. So every interpretation of epigraphic data is fallible—including the one presented in this paper—and falsifiable with the help of fresh insights and materials.

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62 Engels, 1884, p. 311.
63 Slusser, 1982; Toffin, 1984.
64 Gutschow & Kolver, 1975.
65 Kolver, 1980; Michaels, 1984.

However, neither the scepticism which is the historian's privilege nor the critical-comparative perspective of the interdisciplinary social scientist, appears to find room in Regmi's analyses of the lexicon of the ancient inscriptions of Nepal. His attention is grimly focused on words. Nearly all his learned commentary is confined to isolated words and phrases, on the so-called 'technical terms' used in the inscriptions. Consequently, Regmi misses the content of the inscriptions, i.e., the economic, the political, the social, and above all the ideological content of the inscriptions. Evidently, Regmi is well-versed in Indology—in the Sanskrit language Indian classical texts and inscriptions, Nepalese paleography and Hindu astronomy. The fact that after devoting four decades to research on Nepalese history, Regmi successfully missed the historical import of the ancient inscriptions of Nepal shows that there is a valid distinction between pedantry and historiography. We can only hope that Regmi will address these critical issues in the forthcoming Volume IV: *Ancient Nepal* 'exclusively devoted to socio-economic conditions, as revealed by the inscriptions',[66] and give us, the non-specialists, the distilled essence of four decades of research in Nepalese history and Indology.

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66 Regmi, 1983, pp. X, 8, 20, 137, Addenda, and *passim*.

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Mediaeval History of Nepal: A Review of Petech

Mediaeval History of Nepal, c. 750-1482 by Luciano Petech; Second, thoroughly revised edition; Italian Institute for Middle and Far East. Serie Orientale Roma No LIV, Rome, 1984; pp. 254, including appendixes, genealogical tables, bibliography and index; Lira 40.000=Rs 370.

Luciano Petech's *Mediaeval History of Nepal* c. 750-1480 (Rome: 1958) was, by any standard, a landmark for its time. Prior to its publication very little original work had been done on the history of mediaeval Nepal. Nearly a century ago, Bhagwanalal Indraji published *Some Considerations on the History of Nepal* (1884), in which he scanned the chronological data supplied by modern chronicles in the light of the twenty-three inscriptions he had published four years earlier. Cecil Bendall added a few more inscriptions, and with the help of manuscript colophons, inscriptions and coins he published a seminal paper in 1903. The chief attraction of Bendall's paper, 'A History of Nepal and Surrounding Kingdoms 1000-1600', was the fact that Bendall made a feeble attempt to use a mediaeval chronicle which he had recently discovered in the Durbar Library, Kathmandu. Piecing together every bit of information he could collect from Nepalese sources, Indian classics, Tibetan and Chinese documents, and European materials, Sylvain Lévi made heroic efforts to reconstruct Nepal's ancient and mediaeval history in the three classic volumes of *Le Népal* (1905-1908). Despite its age the work still remains a basic reference tool. Lévi gave a sober but perceptive outline of the mediaeval history of Nepal by critically evaluating all the sources of information he was able to collect at the beginning of this century.

For nearly half of this century Nepalese scholars, competent to work on primary source materials along modern lines of historical research, were almost non-existent. Most of the vernacular textbooks on Nepalese history were summaries of the vamśāvalī-s such as the one edited by Daniel Wright (1877). The more knowledgeable authors such as D.R. Regmi summarised Bendall, Lévi, Wright, Kirkpatrick, Hamilton and Jayaswal within verbose and inconclusive frameworks.[1]

Like his predecessors Bendall and Lévi, Petech (1958) directly tapped primary source materials. The most important of these were manuscript colophons and the mediaeval chronicles, particularly the all-important *Gopalarājavamśāvalī* and its cognate—the fragment of a chronicle which Petech discovered in the Kaisher Library, Kathmandu. The potentiality of manuscript colophons for documenting the historicity of mediaeval kings was identified by Bendall for the first time. A judicious and critical use of all the colophons available to him was made by Lévi. But the total number of colophons they could collect was limited to a few dozen. Above all, they failed to penetrate the obscure textual surface which surrounded the hard core of historical data contained in the newly-discovered mediaeval chronicle. Petech (1958) was way ahead of Bendall and Lévi. Everything else apart, Petech was able to collect nearly 80 dated colophons and two inscriptions for the Thakuris (AD 879-1200) and 169 dated documents, including 23 inscriptions, for the Early Mallas (AD 1200-1480). A great many of these primary sources were published for the first time.

In 1958, Petech's main achievements were two: he reconstructed a reliable chronology and sketched a clear and perceptive outline of the political history of the Thakuris and the Early Mallas. The outline was enriched by unassuming but useful general sections on the mediaeval social structure, administration, coinage and a section on the cities of the Valley. Although Petech defined the aim of his book in modest words

> as my main purpose was to place on a more secure footing the chronological and political framework of Nepalese mediaeval history[2]

the book laid the foundation for Nepal's mediaeval history on a truly scientific line.

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1 Cf. Regmi, 1952.

2 Petech, 1958, p. 3.

Twenty-six years later, Petech has recently published a 'second, thoroughly revised edition' of his book. Between Petech (1958) and Petech (1984) the historiography of Nepal in general and of mediaeval Nepal in particular has had a most fruitful and eventful time. Among other things, Nepalese scholars have now come of age—both active and productive, albeit ambitious at times. Whereas Petech (1958) refers to only 25 inscriptions of the period (AD 879-1480), nearly 100 inscriptions of the period have now been discovered and published: most of them by Nepalese scholars. Numerous documents of the Early Malla period have been published, studied and analysed, including the *Gopalarajavamśāvalī* and the cognate chronicles. Here, mention must be made of D.R. Regmi's *Medieval Nepal* (4 Vols) (Calcutta and Patna, 1965-1966)—the most prolific and ambitious piece of writing by a Nepalese scholar. In this work, there is a bewildering corpus of extremely useful fresh materials published for the first time. Unfortunately, however, they are poorly edited and uncritically presented. Petech faults Regmi (1985-1966) as 'a rather prolix and repetitive piece of historiography' (p. 3). The looseness of structure, the contentious tone, and the verbosity of style are not the disease: they are merely the symptoms of a basic intellectual lacuna in the historian. Beginning from his earliest published papers (1942) to his latest *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal* (3 Vols) (Delhi: 1983), Regmi's fundamental handicap, as a practising historian, has been the absence of a conceptual framework, without which one cannot cope with the data or make any coherent sense of the mass of accumulated materials. Unlike Regmi, Petech's strength lies in his avoidance of ambitious scales. In the revised version, too, he sticks admirably to his original modest purpose, i.e., 'to place on a secure footing the chronology and political framework of Nepalese mediaeval history' (p. 3). He even stakes a disclaimer this time:

> As I had already cautioned the reader in 1958, it is rather an old-fashioned history-writing which is offered in the following pages: dynasties, kings, wars, chronological problems etc. (p. 3)

Without denying that time has already come to divert our attention to researches on social, cultural, and economic aspects of mediaeval Nepal, even after a quarter of century's researches Petech has shown unwavering faith in the tradition of 'old-fashioned history-writing', unequivocally

preoccupied with names, dates, dynasties-with what Sylvain Lévi would have called 'the phantoms of the Dark Ages'.

In the history of Nepal, the Dark Period is not just a colourful metaphor: a great hiatus between the Licchavis (AD 464-733) and the Early Mallas (AD 1200-1482) is one of the most inexplicable features of Nepalese history. After Jayadeva II's inscription of Saṃvat 157/AD 733, we have only five dated documents with the name of the reigning king to fill in the gap of 146 years:

1.	180	Māgha Kṛṣṇa	2/December 27,	756 Mānadeva
2.	---	Aṣāḍha Kṛṣṇa	7/	Mānadeva
3.	250	prathama Aṣāḍha	2/May 31, 827	Balirāja
4.	271	Vaiśākha śukla	5/April 8, 848	Baladeva
5.	301	Vaiśākha śukla	7/April 13, 878	Mānadeva

Like most students of Nepalese history, Petech is disturbed at this gap, particularly because his ultimate ambition is to 'place on a secure footing the chronological framework'. Such big gaps in political chronology are matters of poor comfort for him. Consequently, Petech had to look for 'explanations'. 'Chapter III: The Late Licchavi Period' is, thus, an essay in explanation made up of controversial arguments to fill in this uncomfortable gap in the political chronology. Petech resorts to Chinese sources (AD 643-651) which merely show that Nepal had remained a protege of Tibet since Narendradeva (AD 643) and that 'the Tibetan ascendancy in Nepal' had 'waned after AD 651'. Unlike the dispersed and contentious discussions in Regmi's *Ancient Nepal* (Calcutta: 1969-192; 214-222; 289; and 347-352), Petech sums up the whole question of 'Tibetan ascendancy in Nepal' in a few clear, concise, and well-documented paragraphs (pp. 24-27) and the sources of confusion are clearly traced—except for a very basic one.

> In 643 or 644, the Tibetans helped the pretender Narendradeva, then a refugee in Tibet, to overthrow the usurper Viṣṇugupta, restoring the Licchavi dynasty to the throne. After this, the king remained a protegee (sic) of Tibet...In a fragment possibly going back to Wang Hsuan-ts'e Nepal is described as a state subordinate (*shu)* to Tibet. (p. 24)

Here, Petech's reference is to a confusing paragraph in *Shih-chai fang-*

chih compiled by Tao-siuen in 650. The relevant paragraph reads

> Recently the orders of the Empire [China—KPM] passed by the Kingdom [of Nepal—KPM] and thence extended far. Now it depends (*shu)* on T'ou-fan (Tibet). (Chapter I, p. 97, col. 13)

However, the last crucial sentence of this paragraph is replaced by a different one in *Fa-youen-tehou-lin*—the famous encyclopedia of Buddhism compiled by Tao-che in 668. In the encyclopedia, 18 years later, the same paragraph reads:

> Recently the orders of the Empire passed by the Kingdom and thence extended far. On the east, the kingdom of Women is adjacent to T'ou-fan. (Chapter 29, col. 14)

The paragraph reappears, as in 650, in both the recensions of the T'ang Annals—the Old T'ang Annals compiled by Liu Hsu in 945 and the New T'ang Annals compiled by Ou-Yang Hsin in 1072. Lévi assumes that the common source of these extracts 'might have been' the lost travel accounts of Wang Hsuan-t'se—partially preserved in fragments in the above sources. (See Lévi, 'Les Missions de Wang Hiuen-Ts'e dans l'Inde', *Journal Asiatique,* 1900 May-June, pp. 442-443 and ff). Lévi does not satisfactorily explain the transparent divergence in the two versions. In *Le Nepal* (1905) Vol I, p. 159,Lévi, who favoured the Tibetan-ascendancy-in-Nepal theory, translates only one (650) version, leaving out the other. This may be the source of entire confusion among scholars favourably disposed to the Tibetan ascendancy theory.

However, this does not help to fill in the gap in Nepalese chronology which spans the years AD 733-879. Petech's explanation is not any more strengthened by his debatable attempt to interpret 'a puzzling passage' in the *Gālarājavamsāvalṛ* (folio 23a):

Tatpaścād bhoṭārajenamāyatih Nepālamaṇḍdale rājyam karoti

which he translates as:

> After him the King of Bhoṭa came and established his rule in the Nepal Valley. (p. 27)

Petech confesses that

> Two interpretations are possible: either Bhoṭa is Tibet, or it is the same as Bhonta, the medieval name of the Banepā region to the east of the valley... The balance is almost even and I am not prepared to decide the question either way although it must be conceded that the graphical difference between Bhoṭa and Bhonta scores a little point in favour of Tibet (pp. 27-28).

This little graphic point in favour of Tibetan ascendancy in the 8th-9th century Nepal is somewhat weakened by the fact that the orthography of the chronicle Petech cites is much less than standardised. Several of the place-and personal names used in the chronicle are transcribed in more than one 'standard form'—real or assumed.[3]

In 'Chapter IV: The Transitional Period', Petech deals with the political history of the the Nepal Valley during the 321-year period, between the founding of Nepāla Saṃvat (on Thursday October 20, 879) to AD 1200. He adopts what he thinks is 'the non-committal heading Transitional Period' for these 321 years. The term was first used by Mary Slusser and popularised by her in *Nepal Mandala* (Princeton: 1982). On any account this is an inapt term because in the history of a country with a total recorded history of less than 1500 years, to call a time-span of 321 years 'the transitional period' is a little too lavish, particularly for the historian aspiring to erect an infallible chronology. There is, of course, ample cultural justification for taking the year AD 879 as a new signpost in that a new epoch era, a new frame of time-computation, comes into use on and from that year. We do not yet know the precise occasion of the founding of Nepāla Saṃvat though. Petech uses an equally astonishing term, 'Newari Samvat'. No known or extant document of the period cited by Petech calls this epoch era 'Newārī'. On the contrary, it is consistently called Nepāla or Nepāliya or Naipālika Saṃvat. As Petech well knows, Newārī is not even a corrupt colloquial Prākrit form of Nepāla. Nor is it used in any document dated earlier than the 18th-century Capuchin dispatches to Rome.

Although the 321 years is a protracted continuation of the Dark Period

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3 See the Index of Personal Names and the Index of Place-names in Vajracarya and Malla, 1985, pp. 191-203.

following Jayadeva II, there is no such dearth of 'source materials' of a sort for the first three centuries of the new epoch era as for the 146 years following AD 733. The earliest colophon of the period is dated NS 40/AD 920 and the earliest inscription is dated NS 107/AD 987. Even in 1958 Petech succeeded in collecting 90 documents including two inscriptions for this so-called 'transitional period'. To this, he has now added 15 more inscriptions and 25 new colophons. However, of these 41 new pieces of documentation for the period, only three are unpublished previously—two documents (Nos 1 and 6) of Baladeva (AD 1048-1060) and 1 (No 5) of Rudradeva (AD 1167-1175). All these three colophons are from S. Matsunami's *Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Tokyo University Library* (Tokyo, 1965).

The more disturbing aspect of this *quantitative* expansion of Petech's documentation for the transitional period is that not a single of these 41 new documents upsets or enriches the chronology already established before the book was published. On the other hand, as the book appears to have already gone to press by December 1983, it was perhaps already too late for Petech to take note of Mohan Prasad Khanal's *Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇaka Aitihāsika Sāmāgri* (Kirtipur: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, October 1983). Among others, it contains seven inscriptions of the period: No 8 Saṅkaradeva, NS 173; No 9, Saṅkaradeva NS 172; No 10, Lakṣmīkāmadeva, NS 158; No 12, Harṣadeva, NS 207; No 15, Siṃhadeva, NS 241; No 16, Mānadeva, NS 260; and No 17, Amṛtadeva, NS 296. Among these, Inscriptions No 12 and No 16 completely upset Petech's chronology, the first by extending the earliest known date of Harṣadeva (Jyeṣṭha Kṛṣṇa 7, 207) and the second by extending the latest known date of Mānadeva (Bhādra Kṛṣṇa 7, 259). Saṅkaradeva (NS 172-173) of Inscription Nos 8 and 9 is completely new to the established chronology. The disproportionate significance of such miserable little pieces of information clearly unmasks, not only the poverty of source materials for conventional political history, but also the poverty of old-fashioned historiography as an intellectual enterprise, focused on dates, dynasties, kings, kingdoms and wars, on the 'little kings killing and pillaging each other'—as Lévi has so graphically put it.

The belaboured structure called the chronology of the transitional period is thus, on the whole, a dreary reading consisting of some 130 extracts from manuscript colophons and inscriptions, containing little but the names of reigning kings, their dates and at times the place where

the manuscript was copied. Unlike inscriptions which are often state or royal documents, manuscript colophons are not state documents as such. That the political historian, in default of other 'source materials', is obliged to resort to this spurious, but non-political, outgrowth of cultural enthusiasm is in itself a telling story. That the marginal notes of the not-too-learned scribes are the stuff out of which our 'political history' is made is a painful realisation for enthusiastic newcomers to the field such as the reviewer. Even more painful is the realisation that the source materials are already near the point of exhaustion, already reaching a point of no return, a little too soon perhaps. This source-materials 'crunch' is all but evident in Petech's second, 'thoroughly revised edition', published after a gap of a quarter of a century, quantitatively adding 41 new documents without contributing anything to the already established chronology. Thus,old-fashioned historiography may have reached its point of consummation in Petech 1984, or so it seems.

Just to give one brilliant example of the style, summing up the rule of Narendradeva on the basis of eight extant colophons he had diligently collected, Petech writes:

> Narendradeva governed Bhatgaon since last 1133; in the period 260-267 (AD 1140-1147) he ruled the whole country as king. Nothing else is known about him. (pp. 60-61)

If Petech cares for it, he can add still one more 'document' to his list. There is an inscription dated NS 265 of the time of Narendradeva on a vajrācārya crown deposited now in a museum in Paris (See M. Gilles Beguin, 'A propos d'une tiare d'officant Bouddhique', *La Revue du Louvre et des Musees de France,* Vol 3, 1984). However, the point is: will this additional colophon tell us anything else of use to the political historian? The whole period of 321 years before the rise of the Mallas is merely a dismal list of 'historical names and dates'. The only difference between the conventional vamśāvalīs and the old-fashioned political history of the Thakuris is that the latter is 'positive', i.e., confirmed by other historical documents of a sort. The poverty of the narrative is, of course, not due to the intellectual lapses or personal weaknesses of the historian. Indeed, the Dark Period is not just a handy phrase. It nearly adequately describes the first half of the period covered by Petech's book. Twilight, if not total darkness, is the stuff of which political history of Nepal is made during

the period. We grope in vain for illumination amidst a debris of miserable colophons and fragmented inscriptions. Yet, alas, we do not yet know even the basic elements of political history of the period. We do not yet know for sure who these 'little kings' were; where they ruled from; what the origins of their 'dynasties' were; where their 'royal seats' were. Nor do we know for sure whether these 'little kings' following Rāghavadeva (ca. AD 879-919) were merely the survival of the ancient Licchavis who receded mysteriously into oblivion after ca. AD 750.

Fortunately, as we get closer to our times, Petech's narrative gets richer in content. Chapter IV of Petech 1958, dealing with the Mallas, is now split into three separate chapters: 'Chapter V: The Early Mallas'; 'Chapter VI: The Tripura and Bhonta Families', and 'Chapter VII: Jayasthiti-Malla and the Karnāṭa-Mallas'. Justifying his new scheme Petech writes:

> The name *Malla* has been hitherto conventionally used for the kings who ruled the valley from 1200 to 1768/69...the name is incorrectly employed to cover at least three different dynasties...Accordingly, I shall deal with these dynasties in three separate chapters. (p. 79)

At what point in a family-tree does a new dynasty begin and collateral scions end is a question worth debating. Instead of 'three different dynasties' we may be merely dealing with 'three different rival or collateral families' belonging to the same dynasty. In Petech's Genealogical Table B (p. 230), instead of four separate 'dynasties' we may be looking at the same family-tree with rival scions, except that we are still in dark about 'the missing links'. That power knows no kinship is only too clear from the family-history of Jang Bahadur Kunwar and his descendants. Yet, there is little room for doubt that Petech's latest scheme on the Mallas is richer than anything he has written earlier on mediaeval Nepalese history. This is so because of several reasons. Petech has now fuller access to the medieval chronicles—the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī*, the Kaisher Library Fragment, and the abridged vamśāvalī discovered by Dhanavajra Vajracarya in Gorkha. He has also some 57 inscriptions, though still far and few between, 11 in all before Jayasthitimalla. This dearth of epigraphic sources is, however, compensated by the rich and detailed accounts in the chronicles for the Early Mallas, the Tripura and Bhonta Families. If we compare the two editions of Petech, it becomes clear that although he tried to use the

chronicles in 1958, he was all but bewildered by the impenetrability of the language of the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī.* Thanks to the generosity of CNAS and the Magnanimity of Vajracarya, in 1984, Petech's access to it became less painful:

> My understanding of the Chronicle was much facilitated when during my stay in Nepal in 1982 Mr. Dhanabajra Bajracharya generously allowed me to utilise his unpublished Nepali translation of the *Gopālavamśāvalī;* by its help most if not all the difficulties were overcome. (p. 7)

With such generous access to Vajrācārya's published and unpublished papers the difficulties of comprehending key source-materials for the Mallas were painlessly overcome. Petech's new treatment of the Mallas, therefore, shows a substantial change.

The chronicles apart, Petech has collected 195 colophons and 57 inscriptions for the period between AD 1200 and 1482 (a total of 282 years). Of these, 83 are new ones, not included in the first edition. However, all of these, with the exception of six colophons, are already published. Of these six documents, two are from the Tokyo University Catalogue; the third from the Kyoto University Catalogue (p. 94, footnotes 4, 6 and 7), and the fourth one was communicated personally to Petech by Vajrācārya (p. 163, footnote 5). The remaining two colophons were personally communicated to Petech by Purnaharsa Bajracharya (pp 83-84). None of this is intended to deny the fact that Petech is a first-rate scholar on his own right. His strong points are too many: his impeccable knowledge of epigraphy, the Sanskrit language, Hindu astronomical computations, familiarity with Tibetan-Chinese sources, not to mention his felicity in European sources and ease of access to Nepalese published and unpublished works. Yet, it is unbelievable that he still thinks that

> Malla tax (*mallakara*) (in Licchavi epigraphy refers to) the tax imposed on their subjects, either for defence or for tribute purposes. (p. 71)

In a well-documented paper, a Nepalese scholar had already convincingly shown that the mallakara was a tax levied on sheep.[4] Equally astonishing is Petech's identification of the respectable feudal title *rāṇaka* with a Magar

4 Nepal, 1980.

surname and Pancavata with a Magar country on this flimsy ground. Rāṇaka was a respectable feudal title used in, among other places, mediaeval Mithilā—an unlikely place for Magars to drift to in the late 12th century AD! Yet another surprise for us is the legend perpetuated by Petech,[5] circulated uncritically by Regmi[6] and reiterated unrectified by Petech (p. 29). According to Petech,

> The Svayambhū Nāth inscription of 492 NS tells us that Jayarājadeva died as a result of having been burnt asleep.

The Svayambhū Nāth inscription of NS 492 is luckily still intact on the site. The lines 7-8 merely refer to the invasion and arson by Sultan Samas ud-din Ilyas and to the death of King Jayarājadeva in course of time. The two events are totally unrelated:

> *kālena kiyatā dhimān sa rājā tridivaṅgataḥ*

There is nothing here, as far as one can see, which tells us that the king died 'as a result of having been burnt while asleep'.

This compels us to raise a related question: was Petech able to interpret the materials to which he had so easy and generous an access? There are reasons to doubt if all of Petech's interpretations of the chronicle materials are impeccable. The chronicle was compiled at the court of Jayasthitirājamalla: he is praised in no uncertain terms. Yet, Petech misses two central ambiguities of the chronicle:

1. In the whole chronicle there is not a single clue as to the social origins or lineage of Jayasthitirājamalla—except the cryptic note that he was brought by Devaladevī.
2. There is not a single explicit entry in the whole chronicle which tells us when Jayasthitirājamalla was formally crowned a King of Nepal.

Petech claims that

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5 Petech, 1958, p. 124.
6 Regmi, 1965, p. 313.

> The formal proclamation took place on September 15, 1382 when Jayasthitimalla gathered all the noblemen (*bhāro*) and accepted their homage and offerings (*prasāda*). (p. 137)

The text of the chronicle (folio 60b: line 3) reads in our English translation as follows:

> In NS 502, on āśvina śukla aṣṭami, śrī śrī Jayasthitirājamalladeva the King consecrated the royal sword by assembling all the nobles in the royal courtyard. He distributed 1700 pieces of shields and swords.[7]

Clearly, the occasion was not a coronation ceremony: it was āśvina śukla 8, i.e., the Kulachi-Bhoe-ceremony during the Durga Puja in the Royal Palace.

Yet, in the whole book, 'Chapter VI: The Tripura and Bhonta Families' (pp. 93-136) is, without any doubt, the best part of the revised Petech. It has all the virtues of Petech's writing: it is clear, concise, sharp in focus, and above all firmly based on solid data culled from the chronicles. The entire chapter in its present form and shape would have been impossible to conceive, let alone reconstruct, had there been no chronicles—the *Gopalarajavamśāvalī* and its cognates. With admirable patience and success Vajracarya has been using these materials for well over two decades. His papers on the Doyas, on the Rāmavardhanas, on the Muslim Invasion of 1349, and on the political history of early and late mediaeval Nepal have shed much light on this obscure period and its source materials. Petech's contribution lies in the fact that he has imposed a chronological structure and a convincing political interpretation on the chronicle materials. All this is evident from Petech's remarks at the end of the chapter:

> All these colourful events are known from v3 and VK only, since the colophons, which had grown rare during these times of strife, continued to recognise the legitimacy of the Gwanla Kings only. (p. 121)

Where Petech has no chronicle materials to rely on (Dharmamalla, Jyotirmalla and Yakṣamalla) his narrative thins down as usual, though

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7 Malla in Vajracarya and Malla, 1985, p. 162.

his treatment remains secure—based as it is mainly on colophons and inscriptions.

In many ways, the most readable sections of the book are the general chapters: 'Introduction'; 'Chapter I: Sources'; 'Chapter II: Chronology'—all at the beginning of the book, and 'Chapter VIII: Social and Administrative Conditions', at the end. Here,too, Petech sticks to absolute essentials with scholarly sobriety, yet he has some very significant generalisations to make on the structure of mediaeval feudal power and society, on the physical and cultural canvas of this power-play. On the economy as such, there is precious little, except for a few pages on coinage. We have now some additional information on mediaeval coinage in the studies of Bernhard Kolver.[8] The most provocative remarks made by Petech in these chapters are, of course, about religion and the State and about the political status of the cities of mediaeval Nepal Valley. In Chapter VIII, Section B deals with the Monarchy and Section C, with the Nobility (pp. 188-193). In less than five pages, Petech has distilled the political essence and the nature of the mediaeval feudal power structure. One is almost tempted to say that this is all that is there to the political history of mediaeval Nepal.

Petech gives a curious interpretation of the word *viṣaya*, that a *vṣaya* is necessarily 'on the outskirts of the Valley, geographically speaking outside it' (p. 193). In the Narayan Chaur Inscription of Jayadeva II's time (No. 149 in Vajrācārya's edition of Licchavi Inscriptions), while demarcating the land-boundaries of the grant located in the Naxāl area, line 49 refers to a Voḍḍa Viṣaya. If a *viṣaya* is necessarily outside the Valley, as Petech has it, the location of a *viṣaya* right around a cluster of *draṅga-s* should have been a geographical impossibility. *Viṣaya* is the administrative status of a settlement, not its geographic location.

Unlike in the first edition, Petech is now less sure of himself about the location of the Licchavi capitals and palaces:

> The time is not yet ripe for a final choice. (p. 184)

is a wise and sober but unexpected remark from a scholar who tends to be too often so committed. Despite his own later observation that

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8 Kolver, 1981/82.

> We have no significant evidence to show which was the capital of Nepal in the period before Jayasthitimalla. (p. 187)

Petech concluded earlier that

> Patan became the capital (or one of the capitals) in the Transitional period (p. 184) or, Patan seems to have been the capital during the Early Malla and the Tripura/Bhonta periods. (p. 188)

Petech diligently arrives at this conclusion on 'the statistical average of the preserved colophons and inscriptions' (p. 185). Here, the historians of mediaeval Nepal remind us of the proverbial sage (ṛīṣi) who always analysed the realities of the world outside by merely looking at the shadows cast inside the tree-trunk cave where he meditated. To have to deduce every element of our mediaeval political history from such meagre non-political documents as the colophons of ritual or religious manuscripts, copied by the pious scribes is, of course, an unforeseen necessity. But, when our historians begin to calculate 'the statistical average' of the place where these manuscripts were copied to decide where the medieval royal seat lay, we might as well say that we have had nearly enough of 'the colophons'.

Mary Slusser had almost mercilessly destroyed Petech's pet idea that Patan was a mediaeval capital city.[9] To stick to such a shaky idea so rigidly is now no more academically tenable unless better evidence than the colophon statistics is available to conclusively show that Patan was ever a royal seat before Siddhinarasiṃhamalla (AD 1620-1681). Besides, Petech is not at all consistent in the application of his statistical tools. We wish he had applied the same tools to decide the complex relationship between religion and the mediaeval Nepalese State. Starting from the first dated manuscript of the period, *Prajúāpāramitā* dated NS 40 (AD 920) to the last ones of the period, *Paúcarakṣā* dated NS 600 (AD 1480), it would have been a most rewarding statistical exercise to find out how many of the manuscripts are Hindu (Saiva, Vaiṣṇava and Nātha) and how many Buddhist (Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna). More important will also be the average of the places where the manuscripts were copied—courts, temples or monasteries. Petech's sweeping remark that

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9 Slusser, 1982, p. 123.

> The king in his public capacity was bound to follow the Hindu rites and uphold the Hindu social order. Saivism was the official creed of the monarchy. (p. 203)

deserves to be questioned. In the cultural history of the Nepal Valley, during the period covered by revised Petech, Buddhism in its later versions played a most crucial role. This is evident from the fact that several of the extant monasteries were founded during this period or a little later. (See John Locke, *The Bāhās and Bahis of the Kathmandu Valley*, forthcoming). This flowering of Buddhist institutions could not have been possible without state patronage or royal investment, nor without sufficient social prestige accorded to Buddhism. Most monasteries have considerable landed property as royal endowments. One really wonders if Petech had looked into this aspect of interrelationship between religion and the State, rather than just scratching the surface of the heraldic royal titles assumed by the Mallas. Except for their surface value as *biruda*, they mean precious little. In a cultural canvas where a king described by Petech as 'a staunch Hindu' assuming the typically saiva formula *Paśupaticaraṇa-kamala-sevita Maneśvarīstadevatā-vara-labdha-prasādita* is described by his official chronicler as 'an incarnation of the Buddha, blessed with the grace of Svayambhū in the Kali Yuga, as well as an incarnation of Eight Lokapālas, the Eight Protectors of all sentient beings' only to conclude that 'he was like Rāmachandra in the past', it is nearly impossible to be as categorical as Petech on 'the official creed of the monarchy' or the rites and the values it upheld 'in public capacity'.

Petech has collected some 400 documents of the period from different sources located as far apart as Nor Monastery in Tibet and St Petersburg Library in Leningrad. All of these are documented to establish the political chronology of Mediaeval Nepal. One merely hopes that every item of the documentation is accurate and impeccable. Checking every item is a daunting task—almost as challenging as writing another book. Yet *nullius in verba*—we take nobody's word for granted—is so laudable a motto of the Royal Society of London that it is now and then worth pursuing. Scanning and sampling a few of Petech's documentation has been a disquieting experience. To give only a most telling example, on p. 80, Petech gives the colophon of *Paúcaraksā*, dated NS 265, copied for a certain Indra Bhāvo of South Kathmandu during the reign of Narendradeva. The colophon was first published by T.R. Vaidya and Hem Raj Shakya

in *Medieval Nepal: Colophons and Inscriptions* (Kathmandu: 1970), p.12. However, in Petech's book the date given is 'NS 2-60-5/265 *dvipauṣa śukla ekādaśyām śanaiścara rohiṇī- nakṣtra yoga-sidvi*'. As these astrological details are missing from Vaidya and Shakya, we checked Petech's footnote (p. 80, no. 3) where he writes:

> Partly published by Shakya and Vaidya, p. 12; reproduced by J. Trier, *Ancient Paper of Nepal* (Copenhagen, 1972), Plate 111.

However, on checking the plate in Trier's book, it happened to be a totally different manuscript. The Vaidya-Shakya manuscript is in private possession in Patan; the Trier manuscript is in the Royal Library in Copenhagen (No. 175a). The title of the Patan manuscript is *Paúcarakṣā*; that of the Copenhagen manuscript is *śatasahaāśrikāprajúāpārmitā*. The Patan manuscript was commissioned by Indra Bhāvo; the Copenhagen manuscript, by Nārāyaṇa Thakura. The Patan manuscript was copied in Yaṅgala, South Kathmandu; the Copenhagen manuscript was copied in Manigala, Patan. Only the name of the reigning King and his regnal years are the same; but the remaining astrological data in Petech's documentation come from the Copenhagen manuscript, not from the Patan manuscript. Petech has combined the colophon data from two manuscripts to generate one date—harmlessly, but not accurately. What is disturbing is the confusion of sources because the detailed date comes from the colophon of *śatasāhaśrikāprajúāpārmitā*, not from *Paúcarakṣā*, as Petech has it.

The cover pages of Petech announce that it is a 'thoroughly revised edition'. As we have emphasised earlier, Petech's reputation as a thorough scholar has never been sullied. Unfortunately, however, the revision and edition of this publication do not seem to have been as rigorous as one expects of a Petech or IsMEO publication. To document some ugly examples only, let us take up computation first. On p. 37, Petech gives a colophon for Rudradeva, dated NS 148 Māgha *śukla* 10 on the basis of the symbolic numbering system: *raja vasu-manu-prathiti* (841?=148). Vasu is 8 all right, but no known colophon uses other terms used here. Petech does not seem to have confirmed the validity of published reading. On p. 44, colophon No 2 for Baladeva gives the date NS 152. It should have been NS 172 because the AD conversion is AD 1052. On p. 67, colophon No 1 for Rudradeva gives the AD equivalent for

Phālguṇa Kṛṣṇa 8 NS 288 as May, 1168; it can only be March 4, 1168. Similarly, on p. 71 colophon No 6 for Vijayakāmadeva gives āṣāḍha as the Nepali month and January as the AD conversion. One hopes that it is Māgha, unless Swamikkannu Pallai's tomes on Indian ephemeris are also full of printing errors. They are no fewer in Petech's book. Here is an incomplete list of the some of the more irritating ones:

'developped' for 'developed' (p. 1, p. 105, p. 179); 'constance' for 'constancy' (p. 2); 'leafs' for 'leaves' (pp. 5-6); 'protegee' for 'protege' (p. 24); 'confuse information' for 'confused information' (p. 25); 'reing' for 'reign' (p. 32); 'M.T. Pant' for 'M.R. Pant' (p. 51); 'Jule' for 'July' (p. 61); 'Thākuris' for 'Ṭhakurīs' (p. 67); 'several building' for 'several buildings' (p. 106); 'tried' for 'tired' (p. 107); 'eternized' for ? (p. 107); 'sacral' for ? (p. 108); 'NS' for 'VS' (p. 102 footnote no 4); 'inspite of' for 'in spite of' (p. 109, p. 185); 'sacral highship' for 'sacred kingship' (p.110); 'tollerated' for 'tolerated' (p. 110); 'its tiles indicates' for 'its titles indicate' (p. 111); 'fromt' for 'from' (p. 114); 'teinted' for 'tainted' (p. 115); 'fouded' for 'founded' (p. 118); 'it authentic' for 'if authentic' (p. 119); 'Muhrikha' for 'muhrikhu' (p. 124); 'bits of informations' for 'bits of information' (p. 124); 'disparition' for 'disrepair' (p. 126); 'depart' for 'departure' (p. 127); 'descendance' for 'descent' (p. 128); 'his grounds seems' for 'his ground seems' (p. 128); 'tollerable' for 'tolerable' (p. 128); 'that sound rather vague' for 'that sounds rather vague' (p. 128); 'Suryaman Adhikari' for 'Suryamani Adhikari' (p. 128, footnote No 3); 'flared out' for 'flared up' (p. 134); 'Itam bahal' for 'Itum Bahal' (p. 136 and ff); 'pretendant' for 'pretender' (p. 136); 'stanza' for 'lines/paragraph' (137); 'wich' for 'which' (pp. 20, 146); 'damayed' for 'damaged' (p. 149); 'criterium' for 'criterion' (p. 167); 'explaination' for 'explanation' (p. 157); 'complicate' for 'complicated' (p. 179); 'wa shis' for 'was his' (p. 181); 'halft' for 'half' (p. 182); 'Tagal' for 'Tangal' (p. 184); 'synonimous' for 'synonymous' (p. 185, p. 201); 'religions' for 'religious' (p. 187); 'T.B. Sresthi' for 'T.B. Shrestha' (p. 197); 'Aganakamalla' for 'Anarghamalla' (pp. 79,99,111,230); 'tolleration' for 'toleration' (p. 203); 'confuse' for 'confused' (p. 205); 'castal' for 'caste' (p. 206); 'wreath' for 'wraith' (p. 210); 'S.L. Katare' for 'S.L. Katre' (p. 235); 'Shresthi' for 'Shrestha' (p. 238); etc.

Because the book was a real landmark in 1958 and its second 'thoroughly revised edition' came out after a gap of 26 years, all these typographical

and other errors of oversight make it less prestigious than it would have been otherwise. A unique example of oversight in Petech 1984 is in his introduction to the fragment of a chronicle Petech discovered and published. In the revised edition Petech writes:

> The original abridgement stops with the Muslim invasion of 470 NS, the last words being iti vamśāvalī (p. 8).

One has only to look up the roman transcription of the chronicle in Petech's book (p. 228) to find out that 'the last words' are not *iti vamśāvalī*, but *atha vamśāvalī likhyate*. They are not the last words of the original text, but the initial formula of the new genealogical material grafted onto the old text by the 17-18th century scribe. This is no small surprise because the fragment was discovered and published by Petech a quarter of a century ago. Petech wisely dropped out 'the less scholarly appendixes' from the second edition. The genealogical tables are decidedly an improvement to look up. In Table B (p. 230) Petech prints Jayarudramalla of the Tripura Family in block capital letters, implying that Rudramalla too became a full-fledged king. But the young energetic king-maker, Rudramalla, never reigned; he merely ruled. It would have been so very convenient to add at the end of the book a chronological summary of all the known and established dates of the Kings from Jayadeva II to Yakṣamalla—a kind of vintage and concentrated Petech on a single page. But that is probably for the Third Edition which, hopefully, will not take long either to research or to come out. With disarming modesty Petech writes in his Preface:

> Looking back to the last quarter of a century, I am under the impression that the first edition of the present book has fulfilled its task and has played a useful role, if nothing else, as a provoking factor; many later workers in this field have discussed its findings, accepting or rejecting or criticizing them. (p. 3)

The revised Petech is going to be more than 'a provoking factor' for many workers in the field. It is likely to be a catalytic agent to look for new trails in the historiography of mediaeval Nepal. Even as it is, Petech's is a fundamental piece of work. No one interested in mediaeval history can afford to ignore it.

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23

Vestiges of Totemism in Newar Society

Since the days of Lévi,[1] scholars who have studied Newar social structures have focused on the caste system. They consider it as a unique phenomenon because the Newars alone among the Tibeto-Burman speakers of the Himalayas are the adherents of the *varṇāśramavyavasthā*. Since Hodgson several lists of Newar castes are available. However, prior to Fürer-Haimendorf (1956) few caste-lists were based on first-hand field-work. These lists heavily draw upon the 19th-century chronicles whose precise sources have so far remained elusive. Sthitirājamalla (1382-1395) obviously did not invent the caste system among the Newars, nor did he impose it. If one reads the 19th-century chronicles carefully, it becomes clear that on February 15, 1395, some six months before his death in August, the king performed a *kotyāhūti yajúa* and completed the codification of what could be called the *jajamāni* system—a division of social, economic and ritual occupations among his populace. Unfortunately, the chronicle compiled during his reign does not cover the period as the last entries in the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* do not go beyond AD 1389. The mediaeval inscriptions, colophons, and documents do not seem to have any specialised occupational surnames. Therefore, the accounts of the modern chronicles may very well be true as they are.

The most common mediaeval Newar surnames are *Pāla, Varman, Vardhana, Rābutta, Bhalloka,* or simply *Bhāro.* The more specialised functional-ritual roles were *Māhatha, Mulami, Mahāpātra, Daivajúa,*

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1 Lévi, 1905.

Amātya, Vajrācārya, Acārya, etc. If we go further back to the first millennium AD the available historical records show that the social order was even less differentiated—with *śreṭhi, Sārthavāha, Vārta, Yājnúika, Vipra, Kṣatriya* (with *Varman, Pāla, Jīva, Sena, Mitra, Gupta*, surnames) and, of course, *cāṇḍāla*. The interpretation of terms such as *aṣṭādśsaprakrti* is problematic because it might simply mean the 18 traditional positions in the State bureaucracy. Of course, the kings and feudatories used a phraseology not unfamiliar to the students of Indian epigraphy where the more ambitious of the rulers claimed to be engaged in 'setting the system of castes and orders' or 'in keeping castes confined to their respective spheres of duty'. Sivadeva II (AD 705), for instance, boasted of 'thoroughly imposing the caste system among his people'. But that was the style of epigraphic claims, and all this may, however, be statements of wish rather than description of social realities in the 7th-century Nepal Valley.[2]

In the last 30 years, from Fürer-Haimendorf[3] to Quigley,[4] the Newar caste system has been studied mainly in terms of a hierarchy-versus-mobility model, discretely definable with the help of the diacritics of endogamy and commensality. Although all the scholars claim to have based their analysis and interpretation on first-hand field-work, their interpretations of the data are not only confusing but also mutually conflicting. 'A Newar caste', wrote Fürer-Haimendorf, the doyen of South Asian anthropology, 'is a commensal and usually endogamous group, made up of several exogamous clans, or residential units, but we shall see presently that the principle of endogamy is not as strictly adhered to as in Indian caste societies'.[5] Since this classic statement, several social scientists have made fascinating discoveries—almost nearly reminding us of the proverbial elephant. Early in 1960, Nepali reported hypergamous unions 'without punitive consequences'.[6] Rosser[7] analysed how rich Jyāpus end up as respectable Shresthas. In Pyangaon, Toffin found that 'between the Jyāpus and the Shresthas there are no real barriers, movement from one caste to the other is a fluid process'.[8] Vergati reports

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2 See Malla, 1985, for a further discussion.
3 Fürer-Haimendorf, 1956.
4 Quigley, 1986.
5 Fürer-Haimendorf, 1956, p. 18.
6 Nepali, 1960, p. 145.
7 Rosser, 1966.
8 Toffin, 1977, p. 838.

that in the middle-ranking castes 'a woman can raise the status of her husband', i.e., anagamy and that because of Newar pre-pubertal rite *ihi*, divorce and remarriage are not much of a problem for Newar women.[9] Allen found Newar women continuously 'exercising their traditional rights to divorce, separation and re-marriage'—there is a marked structural and ideological deviation from orthodox Hinduism, particularly in Newar evaluation of women and female sexuality.[10] Quigley has recently discovered the 'pervasive ideology of caste purity allied to a principle--and practice--of isogamy (i.e., territorial endogamy)'. Basing himself upon Dhulikhel Shrestha data, Quigley concludes

> The ideology of hierarchy among Newars is consistent and incontrovertible and operates primarily through isogamous marriages.[11]

But Dumont and Pocock are categorical in their view that territory is neither a fundamental organising principle in Indian society nor a sociological reality—a datum of social structure.[12] In a society where the family of the bride and family of the bridegroom have to exchange gifts about 10 times a year, all on foot and on human shoulders, what has been called 'isogamy' may be, at least in part, a logistic commonsense. Fürer-Haimendorf noticed the strong residential character of Newar social units (*nani, bāhā, bahi, āgama, sāh*). Kolver and Gutschow found ritual and social hierarchy reflected in the organisation of space in Newar towns.[13]

For the moment, then, 'the ideology of hierarchy operating primarily through isogamous marriages or territorial endogamy' seems to be the sociological essence of the Newar caste system. Few scholars have, however, looked into the political, economic and social causes underlying this psychology of introversion, exclusiveness, and the proliferation of endogamous status groups, each staking rival claims to higher ranks in Newar society. After a seven-year-long economic blockade of the Kathmandu Valley, a quarter century-long bellicosity and subversion, the Newar city-states were absorbed into what was to be a modern nation-

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9 Vergati, 1982, p. 284.
10 Allen, 1986, p. 97-98.
11 Quigley, 1986, p. 94.
12 Dumont and Pocock, 1957.
13 Kolver and Gutschow, 1975.

state. The centre of power shifted from the Newar noble families to the power and land-hungry rural nobility whose core values were concentration of power at home and conquest abroad. The Newars, as a block, were reduced to the status of an occupied subject race, and except for a loyal family or two they were stripped of their social status and economic foothold. The last Newar noble to hold some power, Tribhuvan Pradhan, was beheaded in a court intrigue in 1801. Till 1804, no Newar was admitted into the civil service. The Legal Code promulgated in January 1854 classified the entire Newar community—irrespective of its internal stratification—as an 'enslavable alcohol-drinking caste'.[14] It was only in 1863 that the Newars were made a non-enslaveable community.[15] They were, of course, not admitted in the army till 1951—the year when the festival of Indra Jatra discontinued to be celebrated as 'the Victory Day'—commemorating the conquest of the valley by the Gorkhali army. It was only as late as 1935 that some amendments were made in the old legal code granting Rājopādhyāyas the status of Brahmans and the Mallas and the Shresthas of 'pure extraction' the status of Chetris. Economically, the position of the Newars has been weakened by the diversion of Tibet trade from the Chumbi Valley route since 1904, and the competition with the Mārwāris became all the more stiff since the end of the World War I. Although Jang Bahadur and his descendants were well-disposed to a few clientele Newar families, the 104 years of their family rule was not a golden age of Newar social history. It was only those clientele Newar families patronised by the Ranas who succeeded in upgrading their social and economic status by imitating new norms of the Rana durbar. They succeeded in producing the required social credentials to prove that the Mallas and the *tharghar* (families of noble extraction) alone were 'pure' Shresthas. The amended code classified the rest of the Newar community in the following four major blocks:

a. those Shresthas who are below the pure ones, including Udae, Bare
b. Jyāpu and equivalent castes
c. Mānandhar, Nakarmi, Chipā, Gathu, Khusal, Musal, Dui, Puṃ, and other equivalent castes

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14 Sharma, 1977.
15 Regmi, 1970, p. 19.

d. Untouchables
   i. Kasai, Kusle, Kulu, Dong,
   ii. Chyāmhkhalak, Poḍe—sprinkling of water necessary on touch

This is, of course, only the official picture of the Newar caste system on the eve of the end of the Ranas. What has happened to the Newars is that they have fully come under the grip of the caste ideology—a grip so firm that fission among endogamous groups with each claiming a higher status than is ordinarily accorded it by others became an endemic feature of Newar society. If we accept Leach's criterion, these competing 'grades within a single caste have the nature of social classes rather than of castes'.[16] A kind of social Darwinism reigned supreme, each grade closing in upon itself in self defence. Except the status of the Brahmin at the top and the untouchables at the bottom, the hierarchy, thus, has remained fluid. Today, the Newars may be said to have castes in Dumont's sense that there is a hierarchy of the pure at the top and the polluted at the bottom, but with a very confused situation in the middle.

Fortunately, for us there still survives the vestiges of forms of Newar social organisation which are based, not upon the ideology of hierarchy along the poles of the pure and the polluted like castes, nor upon the principle of rivalry and privilege as the classes, but simply on the principle of identity and difference. Surprisingly, so far no social scientist who has studied the Newar social systems has even reported that the Shresthas and Jyapus in Bhaktapur and Dhulikhel, Manandhars in Banepa, some Shrestha families in Patan, and some Jyapus in Kathmandu have a system of social classification which in Newari is called *kunaṃ* short for *kulanāma* (lineage name). Most of these names are those of animals, plants, insects, flowers, artefacts, physical features which are descriptive in nature. Among many primitive tribes divided into sibs (clan or gentes) the sib name is derived from an animal, plant or natural object. The sib members display special attitudes towards these creatures or things, which are their totems. The institution which comprises the sibs, their totems, and attendant beliefs, costumes and rituals is called totemism. Totemic syndrome, in brief, involves: i) clan organisation; ii) clans taking animal or plant names as emblems; and iii) belief in a relationship between groups and their totems. However, totemism can

16 Leach, 1960, p. 11.

exist in different forms as social phenomenon (formally identical but descriptively distinct sib characteristics) or as cultic phenomenon (attendant beliefs as a peculiar form of socialised mysticism, with distinct attitudes, rituals, and custom surrounding the totems as a mildly sacred realm of nature). Sib characteristics, the drawing of a mildly sacred realm of nature into a social system as a continuum and exogamy combine into totemism with 'striking frequency'. However, in recent years, a long debate continues between the nominalists, the functionalists (Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown) and the structuralists (Levi-Strauss) on the interpretation of totemic phenomena. Levi-Strauss, who launched a stringent attack on nominalist and functionalist positions, does not deny that totemism is 'a logic that classifies' and that totemic symbols are borrowed from nature by men 'to create differences amongst themselves' as a basic schema of classification.[17]

In the Newar social system, exogamous lineages are still more fundamental units than status groups ordered in a hierarchy of the pure and the polluted. For instance, marriages are decided at the lineage or *phuki*-level, not at the caste level. The members of one lineage share the same *digu dya* and the whole lineage must celebrate together the annual worship of the *digu dya* on the same date. Some upper-caste Newars have an *agama* as well—a common lineage sanctuary within a central patrilocality where the lineage deity is worshipped daily. All those who share the same shrine or *digu dya* or *āgama* are *phuki* (stomach or blood brother). They are all ritually bound—observing common ritual obligations in life-crisis rites. Such lineages are exogamous. All totemic names are affiliated to lineage not to castes. Sometimes, after about five or six generations the *phuki* network is split sharing the same totem, but a different *degu-pūjā-guthi*. Whereas caste labels imply a hierarchy of ritually discrete groups—at least in theory if not in practice—totemic names among the Newars appear to be the vestiges of a system of classifying the exogamous lineages which are fundamentally egalitarian in nature. It was merely a system of differentiation among the lineages of equal status. On the basis of what little we can generalise at this stage of our enquiry, Newar totemism resembles the early *gotra*-and-*pravara* system of the Brahmin clans in Vedic or post-Vedic India rather than the full-fledged *varṇa* hierarchy, so elaborately propounded in *Manusmṛti*

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17 Levi-Strauss, 1969, p. 108.

and other law texts. Its main function, among others, was to identify a lineage, to differentiate lineages in a clan, and by doing so to regulate marriage between lineages so that there are no incestuous relations between *phuki*-brothers and -sisters.

Like many other traces of older Newar social and cultural forms, totemism has, of course, been functioning under severe pressure from the caste system. The *gotra* system is at times superposed upon a totemic lineage among the upper-caste Newar. Thus, one can still find in Bhaktapur examples of lineages such as the following, functioning with four social markers:

Horoscope Name	Name in official documents	Gotra	Totem
Bhāju Mān Bhāro	*Bhāju Mān Shrestha*	*Kāśyapa*	*Sulpyā (snail)*

Both Bhāro and Sulpyā begin to be dropped out in favour of Shrestha and Kāśyapa gotra for fear of stigmatisation by groups who no longer use these totemic or older forms, leaving in the end an umbrella term like Shrestha or a *gotra* which is also shared by the Parbatiya Chetris. The superposition of *gotra* is only symbolic as it does not regulate marriage as in the case of the Brahmins—marrying *sagotra* only if they belong to different *pravara*. The identification of *sapiṇḍa* (agnatic) members of a linage (who at one time shared the same *digu dya* but may have now established a separate entity as *bāphuki)* is done among the Newars by means of these totemic names.

Totemism is pervasive among the Jyāpus and Shresthas. As far as we know, neither the untouchables, the occupational castes (other than Mānandhar), nor the Brahmins, nor the Gubhāju, Bare and Udās have totemic names. This needs investigation and explanation. But the receding of the egalitarian exogamous totemic names is no mystery in a social contract where, in the last century or so, there has been such a proliferation of closed endogamous units with rival claims, now completely under the grip of the Hindu ideology of purity-pollution.

Dumont calls Newar castes 'enormous conglomerates of groups distinguished by their profession, social status, and even religion. Clearly, these conglomerates are not castes'.[18] Whether or not to call the various contending and rival status subdivisions, apparently ranked by reference

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18 Dumont, 1964, p. 98.

to an ideology of relative purity, with priests at the top and untouchables at the bottom 'caste system' or merely an imperfect attempt to imitate the Indian classical varṇa-model is a question of terminology. The vestiges of totemism among the Jyāpus and Shresthas leave less room for doubting that the Newar social system, until recent years, is close to what Redfield calls 'a tribal society rearranged to fit a civilization'.[19] The fact that the 'rearrangement' has been a continuous and on-going process has, probably, as much to do with the on-going distribution and redistribution of political and economic power as with Brahminical ideology of hierarchy among various pure and polluted ritual statuses. Who eats with whom, or who marries whom, are sacred questions, intimately tied to the profane question: who are the rich and powerful at any time in our social history? The recent legal upgrading of the Chathari Shresthas from the category of *māsine matavāli jāt* (enslavable alcohol-drinking caste) in 1854 to the status of pure Chetris in 1935 is only one such brilliant testimonial to the fact that Newar castes are neither 'intrinsic' nor 'absolute'—to use Leach's celebrated words.

Among the dominant blocks of Newar castes, the Rājopādhyāyas, Mishras, Jhās and Bhattas were clearly immigrants and descendants of the so-called Paúca Gauḍa and Paúca Drāviḍa brahmin advisers to the Malla kings of the 14th-15th century. Several Newar Chatharis, too, are said to have immigrated to the Valley with the Mithila king Harasimhadeva in AD 1325. The Joshis of Kathmandu, for example, have kept elaborate and detailed family-trees tracing their ancestry back to 32 generations of professional astrologers who came from Mithila. It is interesting to note that totemic names are prevalent among the Shresthas (Chatharis as well as lower status groups) and the Jyāpus, and marginally among the Sāyamis—but none among the Rājopāhyāyas nor among the artisan castes, including Udāe, Bare, Gubhāju and the untouchables.

The comparative evidence from India (the Reddis, for instance) shows that the caste is 'a transformed tribe' and that divisions of the caste originated from totemic clans, many of which retain their totemic names and some of their taboos. Strong traces of totemism are found among the lower Telegu, Kannara, Marathi and Central Indian castes. Ferreira concludes that totemic social organisation was never completely

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19 Redfield, 1960, p. 34.

abandoned by a very large number of castes in the vast central belt of India.[20] He shows how the less totemic the caste, the higher its status. The retention of tribal totemism by castes extends to totemic names and totemic descent, totemic taboos and exogamy, worship of totem images at marriages, and mourning for the dead totem. In several cases, totems have only recently been assimilated by a caste.

Among the Newars, too, the Shrestha and Jyāpus may have been conglomerates of exogamous totemic sibs or lineages which were integrated into exogamous castes. The importance of the *phuki*-network, *digu-dya, digu pūjā guthi*, the compact, closed, residential patrilocal units, an integrated corporate existence of the lineage, more liberal relations between the sexes, frank indulgence in the pleasures of alcohol and buffalo meat, the passion for dance and music and, above all, the role of seniority-based leadership in lineage and corporate lives—all indicate that many of the Newars may have been Hinduised tribes, and that some may have been Hinduised tribals 'anxious to conceal their totemic names by borrowing the names of Brahminic *gotras*'.[21]

In the conduct of his social life, the *phuki*-network is a fundamental reference point for a Newar. A *degu pūjā guthi* consists of all the adult members of a lineage, the most important ritually interacting network, not only celebrating an annual feast in which every adult member must be present, but also interacting at every point of life-crisis rituals of all its full-fledged members. All Newar *guthis* are, in fact, modelled on *degu pūjā guthi*—with a Thakali and a *dujah*. It was, perhaps, upon this model of social organisation—based on lineage and exogamy—that a hierarchy-cum-endogamy model based on the Hindu concept of purity and pollution was superposed. Otherwise, one can hardly explain our data—where a man has a horoscope name *Bhāro* and official-formal name Sherstha, a Hindu *gotra* of Kāśypa Rishi, and a totemic name *Sulpyā* or snail!

The Newars are, of course, heavily influenced by Indian culture. A long period of orthodox Hinduisation has interacted with monastic and esoteric Buddhism. Today, Newar society is based on the foundations of a complex urban culture, in which several sacerdotal and artisan groups have played a crucial role. From a very early period, the indigenous populations of the Nepal Valley were gradually assimilated in a social structure with

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20 Ferreira, 1965.
21 Lanoy, 1971, p. 188.

immigrant Brahmins and Kṣatriyas at the top and unclean service castes at the bottom. However, even two millennia of dominance of the Hindu rulers and the cultural hold of Brahminism exerting too powerful pressures of conformity to caste structure and purity maintenance have not done away with some of the indigenous forms of social life. Newar totemic names can, of course, be dismissed as mere folk taxonomy or as quirks of individual nicknames. But wisdom may lie in not doing so.

The Ku:Na of Bhaktapur Newars

1. Chathari Shrestha: Bhau, Dho, Goṅga, Bātā, Timlā, Dhayaguli, Khwākhali,
2. Pancthari Shrestha: Māka, Phai-ju, Bhā-ju, Goṅga, Hye-ju, Jhaṅga, Bhadrā
3. Jyapu: Ko-ju, Dhola-ju, Byān-ju, Dhuwā-ju, Maka-ju, Kusi, Dho-ju, Kisi.
4. Kumhā: Khaitu, Chu-ju, Māka, Cho-ju, Dhampo, Hāmo, Jhanga, Kha-ju, Khi-ju, Pākha-ju, Sulu, Twā-ju.
5. Jyapu II: Hyango-ju, Khicā-ju, Nakhusi, Phāju, Dhukuchu, Boha-ju, Musyā, Ka:le, Dugu-ju, Thusā, Malka:ju

The Ku:Na of Dhulikhel Shresthas

Khasi-ju, Bi-ju, Byān-ju, Ko-ju, Māka-ju, Puwā-ju, Ko-ju

The Ku:Na of Patan Shresthas

Cipālu, Nyāchyo, Musyā

The Ku:Na of the Jyapus of Kathmandu

Khyā, Syā-baji, Māka:, Dhucā, Ghwārpā, Bhywāwasā, Bakuāa, Bāka, Phaka, Pāchai, Phai, Go, Mu:swa.

The Ku:Na of the Sāyamis of Banepa

Byān-ju, Bakhu, Gidda

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24

Four Documents Relating to a Family History

Four Documents Related to a Family History

The four documents published here are related to the family of Thakujus of Thahiti, Kathmandu. Three of these are *lal mohars;* one is a noting from the records of houses in the locality. The documents throw some fresh light on the family history, so that my account of the family history as presented in Malla (1980) needs rewriting.

Since these documents are related to the Thakujus, a look are related to the Thakujus, a look at them would not, perhaps, be out of place here. The late Historian-Laureate Baburam Acarya writes,

> The ruling classes of mediaeval age) used the title of thakura. The Indians call them thakura. The Nepalis, thakuri, and among the Nepalis also, the Newars call them thakujus.[1]

Commenting on the Thakujus of Bhimsenthan, Kathmandu, Gautamvajra Vajracarya has written that they were 'the descendants of the Vaisya Thakuri kings of Kathmandu'.[2] The earliest mention of the word 'thakura' is attested in a palm-leaf noting (in Prem Bahadur Kasa's Collection), a reading of which is given below:

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1 Acarya, 1981, p. 1. Author's translation.

2 Vajracarya, 1976, pp. 182-183.

१ सम्वत् ५८१ कार्तिक शुक्ल ॥ १३ श चक्वाथ
हाथार दाक्वं लडजंसंज दाक्वं थव थकुर काय थास्य
वव जुरो मनिगलया पंत याङन ववो जुरो ॥
२ हा वर दोय चाललपं मणिलगन हया जुरो ॥
द्वोलखानं पुरख वव जुरो मनिगलयापंत याङ न
जुरो । फनपिं श्री श्री जय मल्ल देव थाकुरस ॥ अ -
३ (थ्यं) नि मनिगलन चालकं विरत्वं जुरो ।
अथ्यंनिक्वो वि श्रव थाकुरत्वे फनपिं श्रारत्वं जुरो शुभ ॥

The word also appears in copperplate dated NS 684 (AD 1564) in which Minister Toyuju Thakura is credited for having established the image of Bhimsena of Kathmandu on Baisaka Sukla 3 Ns 660 (AD 1540).

The 19th-century vernacular chronicles call Siva Simha (AD 1595-1620) 'an illegitimate son of Mahendra Malla' from a Thakurini wife.[3] He was made king by the people after expelling his legitimate brother, Sadasiva. Siva Simha instituted the yatra of Pancalainga Bhairava to be held annually on the 5th of Aswin Sudi. The thakujus of Thahiti believe that they are the descendants of Paculi Bhairava, i.e., Siva Simha. The later kings of Kathmandu and Patan are the descendants of Siva Simha. Therefore, they and their collateral descendants came to be known as Thakujus. Thakuju, thakula and thakura are terms used for the members of the royal family or the king's collateral descendants during the later Malla period. This is evident from the following noting in a *thyāsaphū*:[4]

सम्वत् ७४४ जेष्ठ कृष्ण तृतीया कुन्हु थकुनिजु अभाव जुवो दिन जुरो,
परङस यङ, थनं न्हयथुचास मोहनचवुक्वाथस देङन चोङ पाराव
घार जुव ... जजु मोतके तङ थकुजुपनि वासर नकाव मोतक

The Thakujus of Thahiti used thakuju as surname in Newari documents; in some inscriptions and documents they also used varmana as their family surname.[5] My grandfather used the name mahapatra Purna Malla Varmana.

To come back to the four documents published here. Document 1 is a *lal mohar* granted by King Pratap Simha Shah (1775-1777) to Laxmi

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3 Wright, 1877, p. 207; Hasrat, 1970, p. 64.
4 Vajracarya, 1976, p. 20, Footnote 1.
5 See Malla, 1980, pp. 55-57.

Simha Thakula, confirming him the earlier *suna birta* grant of 9 Kha-s of house and 7 Kha-s of dilapidated sites in Thahiti Tole, Kathmandu. The document is dated Saka 1834 Bhadra Vade 3 Thursday (September 15, AD 1777). The document clearly shows that the area was a settlement of Thakujus where they had a whole colony consisting of number of houses, including some older dilapidated sites.

Laxmi Simha Thakula, however, is a new name to our family genealogy. Hitherto, the earliest authentic ancestor in our lineage was Thaku Simha.[6] He was alive at least until AD 1810 when his five sons from two wives separated. Laxmi Simha may have been Thaku Simha's father as there is gap of 33 years between Document 1 and the date of separation of the five sons of Thaku Simha. If this is so, our genealogy goes back by a generation in the depth of lineage.

An inscription in Tanabahal, Makhan, Kathmandu dated NS 905 (AD 1785) mentions Jayapratapa Simha Thakula and Laxmi Simha Thakula as among the group of five who repaired the roof of the temple of Tanabahal. Later chronicles give the credit of constructing this shrine to Thakuri King Sankaradeva (AD 1069-1083).[7] This shrine is considered the family sanctuary of the Thakuri and Malla kings before the construction of the Taleju temple by Mahendra Malla in AD 1560. The text of the Tanabahal inscription is given below:

१ श्वस्ति श्री सम्वत् ८०५ मिति कार्तिक वद्धि च
२ तुथि, हस्त नक्षत्र, आदित्यवाल कुन्हु, श्री
३ ३ तानान्दे माजुयाके न्हापायगु धलिन से-
४ ङाओ, श्री जयप्रतापसिंह थकुल प्रमुखन
५ श्रश्र लक्ष्मिसिं थकुल पञ्चसमुचयन, धलि
६ न ग्वल ५८ अलाक समेत हिला जुरो शुभ[8]

The inscription is eight years later than the *lal mohar*. It refers to Sri Jayapratapa Simha Thakula as *pramukha*, or head, and Sri Laxmi Simha Thakula as *pancasamucaya*, one of the members of the *degupuja* guthi (?). Socially or chronologically, it is not impossible that both Laxmi Simha Thakulas are one because Laxmi Simha Thakula's descendants did have

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6 Malla, 1980
7 Wright, 1877, p. 159; Hasrat, 1970, p. 47.
8 Vajracarya, 1976, p. 262.

marital and social relations with the Thakujus of Tanabahal. The last noted Thakura who had anything to do with the Tanabahal Thakujus appears to be Jhagal Thakura who was the Prime Minister (cautara) of Mahendra Simha (AD 1700-1722) and, for a while, of Jaggjaya Malla (1722-1736).

Document 2 is a *lal mohar* granted by King Rajendra Vikrama Shah (AD 1816-1847) to Manabir Putwar of Tambalichi Tole, Kathmandu, entitling him the ownership of a dilapidated site which was a part of the property of Thakujus confiscated by Prithvi Narayana Shah during his march to Kathmandu (see Document 3). Manbir Putwar was the eldest great grandson of Balbhadra Putwar who helped Prithivi Narayana Shah in the battle of Nuwakot. The putwar family had thereafter been in royal favour and service. The fifth-generation descendants of Manabir still own the house which they got as a birta from the Shah king.

Document 3 is also a *lal mohar*. Unfortunately, the copy does not contain the *prasasti*, the name of the king, nor the date. However, from the internal evidence it is clear that it was granted by Rajendra Vikram Shah either in AD 1846 or 1847. The reference to the Agama Devata Ghar (a family shrine of the Thakujus of Thahiti renovated later on) makes this dating possible. The house or dilapidated site on the northern side of the shrine was granted to Manabir Putwar whereas the dilapidated site on the southern side of the shrine was confirmed as the property of Visnu Simha Thakuju, the youngest son of Thaku Simha Thakuju.

Document 4 is perhaps the most important of the four. It is a noting of *chebhadel* (the Register of Houses) in the Thahiti locality. It lists five separate houses confiscated by the Gorkhalis and then granted to their retinue either by issuing *lal mohar* (such as Document 2) or by *hukum marji* or *pramangi* (peremptory oral order of the king). It mentions five separate houses king—a two-room house granted by oral order to Ranamardan Shahi; a three-room house at first granted to Jamadar Khanga Simha and later converted into a birta granted to Manabir (verified by Document 2); a two-room house granted to Chopdar Sankhalal; a three-room house granted by oral order to a concubine named Jagat Keti, and finally, a house granted to Jasabir Guru by oral order. This document carries two dates: Saka 1919 Kartika Vadi 3 Roj 3 and a later date Saka 1922 Kartik Vadi 2 (AD 1841-1844).

The significance of Document 4 lies in the fact that even after Pratapa Simha Shah's *lal mohar*, confirming the earlier suna birta of the Thakujus

of Thahiti, the property or parts of it were converted into make-shift residences of Gorkhali officers. A part of it was granted as a birta while at least a part was used to house a concubine. Why the Thakujus were meted out with this favour by the authorities is yet unclear.

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25

The Nepāla-Mahātmya: A IXth-Century Text or a Pious Fraud?

Of the too numerous testimonies of Nepal's religious history some of the most palpable ones are, perhaps, the textual evidence, particularly the manuscripts. Although Nepal has preserved an unbelievable quantity of manuscripts of Hindu as well as Buddhist persuasions, they are mostly in the form of copies, rather than original contributions to religious thought or critical/exegetical commentaries on the cults practised in Nepal. Most manuscripts of cultural or critical significance were at first brought to the Nepal Valley either by wandering scholars seeking royal patronage or fleeing immigrant men of learning—fleeing mainly from tumultuous events in the neighbouring kingdoms. These manuscripts have, at times, been devotedly worshipped, preserved and laboriously copied and decorated for a millennium by pious copyists and scribes or by laymen who sought religious merit in getting these sacred texts copied and preserved at places of worship.

Religious texts actually written in Nepal by Nepalese scholars are far and few between. An interesting group of texts are the local *purāṇas* and *mahātmyas* which glorify and aggrandise local shrines. These texts are modelled on classical Hindu *purāṇas* and *mahātmyas*, and at times transplanted into them as pious fraud, adapting and assembling from several of them. One such text is the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. The Sanskrit text of this *mahātmya* was first published privately from Banaras in 1901 in devanāgarī transliteration by Pandit Muralidhar Jha, based on a Nepalese manuscript in the then Queen's College Library, Banaras. With Jha's text as basis, a Nepali language translation by Mukti Nath Khanal

was published in 1968 by the Royal Nepal Academy. In 1970, Uebach published a German translation with the Sanskrit text from the National Archives (wrongly numbered Cat. I: 1209, following Regmi[1]), giving variant readings from the devanāgarī copy made for Lévi, now deposited in the Institute for Indian Civilisation, Paris. In the meantime, Pandit Kedar Nath Sharma has also published a Hindi translation based on the Jha edition.[2] Recently, the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* has been published in roman transliteration with an English translation by Jayaraj Acharya (1992). Mr Acharya's roman transliteration as well as English translation are based on Khanal's Nepali edition which in turn is based on the Jha edition of 1901. As Mr Acharya does not seem to have consulted the Banaras manuscript, or for that matter any extant manuscript of the *Mahātmya*, this edition is at the third remove from the original texts.

Mr Acharya has, however, 'freely corrected the most obvious grammatical and type errors'. It is disquieting though reassuring to know that 'the mistakes or corrections did not change much of the meaning of the text' (Preface). Although the Acharya edition is not a critical but a popular one, the liberties he takes with Jha's text or Khanal's text are typical of traditional Sanskritists who are intolerant of grammatical mistakes, or any deviation(s) from the *sūtras* of Pāṇini. This is a little astonishing, particularly because Mr Acharya, besides being a scholar trained in Sanskrit *Pāṭhaśālā* and *vidyāpīṭha*, is also a qualified linguist trained at home and abroad in the rigours of modern research. The Banaras manuscript or the Lévi manuscript may have been inaccessible from Arlington, Virginia, USA—his work station—but it should not have been so difficult for an assiduous student like Mr Acharya to consult at least some of the manuscripts in the National Archives, Kathmandu, where he has several well-placed relatives and friends. In the National Archives there are nearly a dozen *Nepāla-Mahātmya* manuscripts, including the much disputed manuscript Cat. I: 984 (Microfilm No. A 332/13). Although Mr Acharya quotes, analyses, emends and disputes the colophon of this manuscript (see Plate I) so passionately, no sensible textual scholar would launch himself on such a hazardous course as Mr Acharya has done here without even consulting his primary sources.

The most controversial part of Mr Acharya's edition of the *Nepāla-*

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1 Regmi, 1966., p. 836.

2 Sharma, 1977.

Mahātmya is not his 'grammatical improvement' on the original, but his 11-page Introduction to the transliteration and translation. For several reasons, no section of this Introduction should go uncontested.

Mr Acharya disputes the interpretation of the colophon of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* (manuscript No I: 984 Microfilm No A 332/13) on the basis of its reading and interpretation published by Uebach[3]. Uebach relied on Petech for her analysis and interpretation of the colophon data, concluding that

> śakābde sindhuvājidharaṇī ca dharayute

is equivalent to Śaka 1174 or 1177 (*sindhu=4* or 7, *vājin= 7dharaṇī* = 1, *dhara* = 1) which gives a date equivalent to AD 1251 or 1254 November. However, she confesses that the day of the week (Sunday), the *yoga* (*Sādhya*), and the *nakṣatra* (*ruruśira*?) 'cannot be clearly verified'.[4] This colophon has since been re-examined by Brinkhaus in his excellent study on the Pradyumna-Prabhāvatī legend in Nepal. His interpretation is based on metrical considerations.[5] Following Petech-Uebach, in his earlier paper on References to Buddhism in *Nepāla-mahātmya* (1980), Brinkhaus had dated the manuscript to AD 1251 or 1254. In 1982, during a personal meeting, I disputed this with him on the colophon evidence, which led Brinkhaus to reinterpret the colophon by rendering it this time 'comprehensible by means of a metrically and grammatically necessary conjecture'.[6] This time he reads it as, śākābde sindhuvjidharaṇī *(ca) dharyute*, interpreting the era, not as Śaka Saṃvat, but as Nepāla Saṃvat, which gives him AD 1653. Thus, Brinkhaus believes that since this is, for him, the earliest dated manuscript of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, AD 1653 October/November is the *terminus ad quen* for the text.

We are referring to Brinkhaus's 'metrically and grammatically necessary conjecture' because Mr Acharya used the same device, i.e., metrically unacceptable extra syllable *ca*-hypothesis, without, of course, referring to Brinkhaus either in his Introduction or Bibliography. In his enthusiasm to demonstrate the antiquity of the text, Mr Acharya goes on

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3 Uebach, 1970, pp. 12-14.
4 Uebach, 1970, p. 14.
5 Brinkhaus, 1987, p. 80.
6 Brinkhaus, 1987, p. 80.

to claim a hoary antiquity for the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text, without consulting any of the extant 58 odd manuscripts! Whereas Brinkhaus thought that the year 774 was Nepāla Saṃvat because 'Śaka' also means a general name for any era, Mr Acharya interprets the year 774 as Śaka Era, claiming that the *Nepāla-mahātmya* text is dated AD 852 or AD 855. The central bone of my contention in this paper is that this is an impossible date for *Nepāla-Mahātmya* manuscript because of the following reasons.

The colophon of the manuscript is misinterpreted, not only by Uebach/Petech or by Mr Acharya, but also by Brinkhaus. The era is Śaka but *sindhu* is 7, *vājin* is 7 too but *dharaṇi ca dhara* is not a one-place numeral 7 or *mountain*, but a chronogram for a two-place numeral, *king*, i.e., 16. This gives us the Śaka year 1677, i.e., 1677+78 = AD 1755. (See Sircar, 1965: 230-233 for the numerical values of the chronograms.) The manuscript in question is an ordinary thick white-paper manuscript written in late Newari script, not a palm-leaf written in Bhujinmola or earlier scripts. Of the 58 manuscripts of the *Nepāla-Mahātṃya* microfilmed by the National Archives, Kathmandu, there is no palm-leaf nor any written in older Newari scripts. Among the dated ones, the earliest one is a manuscript in *haritāla* paper in the National Archives Cat I: 894, Microfilm No A 332/15 with 128 folios, (see Plate II) with the following colophon:

> muni randhrai samudrresca yute nepālavatsare bhādraca sitapakṣe tu
> dvitīyāyām ravaaudine daivajúa cakrasiṃhena nepāla mahimā likhetu

Muni = 7, *randhra* = 9, *samudra* = 7, i.e., Neplāla Era 797, equivalent to AD 1676 August/September. In a private collection, there is a devanāgarī transliteration of a manuscript dated NS 989 (AD 1868), which according to its colophon, is a copy from an earlier manuscript dated Nepāla Saṃvat 790 (AD 1669). (See Microfilm No E 718/1).[7] Thus, among 58 extant manuscripts of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* texts there is not a single manuscript dated earlier than the late seventeenth century AD.

Mr Acharya gives the following five main arguments in favour of dating the *Nepāla-mahātmya* to the mid-9th century AD:

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7 Colophon of a *Nepāla-Mahātmya* manuscript in a private collection dated NS 989 (AD 1868), being a copy of an earlier manuscript dated NS 790 (AD 1669). Microfilm No. E 718/1.

1. The text does not mention any post-Licchavi shrines or temples.
2. It mentions shrines and sites where the Licchavi inscriptions are found. There is a high correlation between the two.
3. Licchavi period Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava shrines are mentioned in the text.
4. Śaka era is used in the text, an era used mostly by the Licchavi rulers,
5. There is no mention of any ruling king in the colophon, as is usual in the Malla period texts, etc.

The *Nepāla-Mahātmya* mentions about 25 Śiva *liṅgas*, out of a traditional total of 64 *liṅgas* listed in the popular 19th-century *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalīs*. Of these 25 *liṅgas*, the Maṅgaleśvara *liṅga* (VI: 66-79), Hanūmadīśvara (III: 15-20), Someśvara in Suluúco, Bhaktapur (XIII: 3-125; XXXVI: 7-28) and Ṭaṅkeśvara are not Licchavi monuments. None of these *liṅgas* is attested in any Licchavi documents. Although the traditions recorded in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, particularly concerning some of the well-known *liṅgas*, are at least older than the fourteenth century, the extant text is not older than the mid-seventeenth century. For example, at Kumbheśvara, when an already dilapidated temple was built by a Jayabhīma during the rule of Sthitirāja Malla in AD 1392, it is recorded in an inscription, first published by Cecil Bendall,[8] that on this holy spot Kumbha *ṛṣi* had undergone severe penance to please Mahādeva (Inscription IX, lines 9-11).

The *Nepāla-Mahātmya* mentions 25 Śiva *liṅgas* but the most important *liṅgas* of the Licchavi period, such as Māneśvara Vijayaśvara, Anuparameśvara, Ratneśvara Śūrabhogeśvara, Dakṣiṇeśvara, Laḍiṭamaheśśvara, etc, are not mentioned in the text nor in the *kṣetrapradakṣiṇā*, whereas those obscure *liṅgas* mentioned nowhere in the Licchavi epigraphy comprise more than 95 per cent of the *liṅgas* mentioned in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. Among the *Śakti pīṭhas*, it mentions Harisiddhi, Vajrayoginī and Vajravārahī, none of which is attested in Licchavi inscriptions.

Mr Acharya claims that the Śaka era is used by the Licchavi rulers, and as this manuscript is dated in the Śaka era it belongs to the Licchavi period. This is an incredible argument in support of the antiquity of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. Mr Acharya might like to consult and scan the corpus

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8 Bendall, 1886, pp. 83-87.

of the Shah period inscriptions, *Lāl Mohars, Shyāha Mohars* and the coins to discover for himself till how late the Śaka era persisted in Nepal. In silver coins, the Śaka era continued until 1911 when Chandra Shumsher officially adopted the era of Vikramaditya. As for the *purāṇa* manuscripts in Nepal dated in the Śaka era, let me arbitrarily list up the 17-19th-century texts dated in the Śaka era from Part VIII of the *Vṛhatsūcipatram: Purāṇetihāsaviṣayakaḥ* published by the National Archives in 1968: *Uṣacaritam* III: 126, Śaka 1760; *Kurma Purāṇa* V: 5350, Śaka 1697, *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* II: 47, Śaka 1679; *Skanda Purāṇa* V: 5846, Śaka 1697, and *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa* III: 734, Śaka 1761 etc.

Mr Acharya argues that the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text belongs to the pre-Malla period because, unlike in the Malla-period texts, this manuscript makes no reference to the ruling monarch. This is yet another untenable argument—a naive argument which can only be marshalled by someone who is totally unfamiliar with the Nepalese manuscript-traditions and scribal vagaries. The Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project has by now microfilmed more than one million folios, including some 5000 palm-leaf manuscripts in public as well as private collections, but not all of them have colophons nor do all colophons, whenever there are any, mention the ruling king or the scribe, and that alone does not entitle us to dump these manuscripts to the so-called 'Dark Period', euphemistically called 'the Transitional Period' (AD 750-1200). Mr Acharya takes the final fatal leap in logic when he writes:

> According to Rocher (1986:237) Haraprasad Shastri and Cecil Bendall discovered, in the Durbar Library in Kathmandu, a manuscript of *Skanda-purāṇa* in Gupta Script, and on paleographic grounds, they decided that it was written before 659 AD. Given the popularity of *Skanda-Purāṇa* in Nepal as early as 659 and the allegiance to *Skanda-purāṇa* claimed by the *Himavatkhaṇḍa* and by *Nepāla-mahātmya* is evidence not only of the location of the *Nepāla-mahātmya* but also its date.[9]

The *Skanda-Purāṇa* manuscript in question is listed in the National Archives *Catalogue* II: 229 and in Shastri's *Catalogue* Part I.[10] The manuscript is not dated but Shastri dates it on the basis of paleography,

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9 Acharya, 1992, p. 7.
10 Shastri, 1905, pp. 141-146.

Gupta or later Licchavi script, by comparing it with a Nepalese manuscript, *Parameśvara Tantra*, dated Saṃvat 252. Bendall thought that the manuscript was dated in Harṣa Era, giving an equivalent of AD 858/59.[11] Shastri, therefore, thought that the *Skanda-Purāṇa* manuscript was paleographically at least 200 years older; thus it was believed to be dated AD 659. But, unfortunately, Bendall's dating of the *Parameśvara Tantra* itself is questionable as no known manuscript in Nepal uses the Harṣa Era, founded by Harṣavardhana in AD 606. So, the whole of Mr Acharya's argument is vitiated by his youthful zeal to prove the antiquity of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* text by proving the antiquity of the *Skanda-Purāṇa*. Even the proven antiquity of any *Skanda-Purāṇa* manuscript has no relevance whatsoever to the dating of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* for the simple reason that the *Mahātmya* merely claims to be a part of the *purāṇa* which, evidently, is not the case. Numerous *khaṇḍas* and *mahātmya* claim allegiance to the *Skanda-Purāṇa*, which seems to be 'a basket for holding everything that cannot fit elsewhere'. In the *Skanda-Purāṇa* manuscript referred to by Mr Acharya, there is no trace of *Himavat Khaṇḍas* let alone of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. In fact, as Shastri confesses in dismay

> There is no mention of *Khaṇḍas* in any of the colophons of the *Skanda-Purāṇa* in the Durbar Library...It gradually branched out into so many *Khaṇḍas* and so many *Mahātmya*...that scholars thought that the *Skanda-Purāṇa* hardly existed except in *Khaṇḍas* and *Mahātmyas*.[12]

The whole edifice of Mr Acharya's chronology collapses once we come to face this set of naked textual evidence staring at us. Mr Acharya seems to have rushed into *terra incognito* of secondary or tertiary sources, not fully realising what these sources are arguing about.

The *Nepāla-Mahātmya* is not a 9th-century text but a late-Malla period pious fraud, concocted by some overenthusiastic pundit who knew bits and pieces of local traditions and bits and pieces of puranic lore. That it is a pious fraud is painfully evident from the wild absence of structural unity in the text. For example, Chapter I on the origin of the Pasupati *liṅga* and Chapters VIII-XII, dealing with the well-known *Harivaṃśa*

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11 Bendall, 1883, pp. xl-xli.
12 Shastri, 1905, p. Liii.

legend-cycle of Pradyumna-Prabhāvatī, are almost bodily lifted word for word from the *Paśupati-Purāṇa*. The earliest extant manuscript of this *Purāṇa* is AD 1504.[13] The absence of structural and thematic unity in the text is nowhere in greater evidence than in the transplantation of the Chapters XVI-XXVI, comprising nearly one third of the whole text, dealing with Rāvaṇa (and Laṅkā) who is reported to have observed dreadful penance at Gokarṇeśvara (XVI: 79-XXVI: l). These chapters have more to do with Rāvaṇa or with Laṅkā than with Nepālamaṇḍala or its Śaivism. These chapters read more like *Laṅkā* or *Rāvaṇa-Mahātmya* than *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. Similarly, Chapter XXVI: the Story of Bhṛṅgi and Chapter XXVIII: the Story of Guṇadhya are meandering and listless narratives whose only Nepalese connection is the so-called origin or the *liṅga* of Bhṛṅgāreśvara, the Bee-Lord incarnate who was Siva's gate-keeper Bhṛṅgi, fallen out of the Lord's favour and condemned to be born a mortal who became the famous author Guṇadhya.

Chapter XXIX: *Kṣetrapradakṣiṇā* or Circumambulation of the Sacred Places is a kind of hurried resume that ties up all the loose ends into an instant guide-book for the pious Hindu pilgrim. Perhaps, this is the only section of the text of some interest to modern students of Nepalese religious history, particularly to gain a Śaivite perspective on the holy sites of the Nepal Valley. In this guide-book there are two critical points worth noting. Even for the *Śakti pīṭhas* it mentions only Guhyeśvari, Rājarāyeśvarī, Vatsalā and Jayavāgeśvarīûall in the environs of the Paśupati complex. The only other *Śakti pīṭhas* mentioned elsewhere are Caṇḍeśvarī or Banepa, Harisiddhī, Vajrayogīnī, and Vajravārāhī. None of these Śakti cults is known in Licchavi documents.

Following Lévi[14] and other scholars following him uncritically, Mr Acharya believes that the '*Nepāla-Mahātmya* puts Śiva, Viṣṇu and Buddha, not only at the same level, but as one and the same'[15]. Already more than a decade ago Brinkhaus had incisively exploded this half-truth about religious syncretism in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*.[16] The text does not put the Buddha at the same level as Śiva or Viṣṇu, let alone consider him as 'one and the same'. The Buddha is clearly made to play a

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13 See Yogi Naraharinath, 1954, pp. 13-17; also Risal, 1972, and Brinkhaus, 1987, for a detailed analysis or textual relations between these two texts.

14 Lévi, 1905, pp. 205-212.

15 Acharya, 1992, p. 8.

16 Brinkhaus, 1980.

subordinate role here—subordinate to Śiva-Pārvatī. He is shown practising austerities to please Pārvatī, who, pleased with the Buddha, appeared under the name of Vajrayogīnī, and instructed the Buddha to erect a *liṅga* (Kāruṇkeśvara) at the confluence of Vāgmatī and Maṇimatī, at Śaṅkhamūla or Sāṅkhū because the *liṅga* is also known as Maṇilingeśvara (Chapter 1:56-67).

In the history of Nepalese Śaivism the cult of the *liṅga* has a place of utmost significance. There are some 25 *liṅgas*, besides the Paśupati *liṅga*, which belong to the Licchavi period. The original *liṅga* of Paśupati was vandalised by Shamsud-din Ilyas in November 1349. This desecrated four-faced *liṅga* stood abandoned on the way to Mrigasthali before it was stolen in June 1987. The present phallus was installed by Jaya Simha Rama in 1380. Undoubtedly, the Paśupati complex was already a sacred area by AD 533. The finest piece of Śaiva sculpture belonging to the Licchavi period, with distinctly Gupta style and features, now located in a damaged state in Kailash, is dated between AD 500 and 550 by art historians.[17] Among the principal features of the *liṅga* cult in the Licchavi period, the most significant appears to be the installation of a Śiva *liṅga* in the name of living or dead mortals. For example, in AD 477, Ratnasangha installed a *liṅga* which he named after himself—Ratneśvara. Some years later, the same donor installed another *liṅga* in the name of Prabhusangha, and called it Prabhukeśvara. Similarly, Jayavarma or Jayalambha installed a *liṅga* and called it Jayaśvara. In AD 505, Vijayāvatī, Mānadeva's daughter born of Queen Śri Bhogini, installed a *liṅga* in Suryaghata, Paśupati, in commemoration of her deceased father and called it Vijayaśvara. The most brilliant instance of this Śaiva practice is documented in Bhaumagupta's mother, Ābhīrī Gomīnī's inscription dated Śaka 462 (AD 540). Ābhīrī Gomīnī installed a *liṅga* dedicated to the memory of her deceased husband, Anuparam, and called it Anuparemeśvara. For worship and maintenance of this *liṅga* she allocated *guṭhī* lands as well. The Paśupati *liṅga* may very well have been founded in the same tradition as all other Licchavi Śiva *liṅga* by a contemporary historical person with committed temporal or spiritual motive. If the Pāśupata sect of Śaivism was founded by Lakulin about the 2nd century BC,[18] the sect might have penetrated Nepal only a few

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17 Pal, 1974, p. 83-86; Bangdel, 1982, p. 53.
18 Bhandarkar, 1928, p. 116-117.

centuries later. From Aṃśuvarmā (died AD 621), who styled himself as *bhagavatpaśupatibhaṭṭārakapādānugṛahito* (favourite of the feet of Lord Paśupati) to Jayadeva II (ca. AD 733), the prominent rulers of the Licchavi Nepal were staunch adherents of Śaivism, without being too sectarian in their religious belief and practice. However, none of the *liṅgas* that were installed in the Licchavi period had any divine-miraculous-mythical origin stories attached to them—perhaps not even the original *liṅga* of Paśupati, which has not been dated earlier than the 5th-6th century AD on stylistic grounds. On the contrary, each one of the Licchavi-period *liṅga* was verifiably installed by contemporary historical personages with unmitigated ulterior motives, as it were. The donor always wished for the well-being of the near and dear living ones (father, mother, relative or the king), for unmixed *puṇya-vṛiddhi* (earning religious merit), or simply *moksa* (liberation) or *svarga-prapti* (attainment of bliss in heaven) for the deceased relative. The miraculous origin stories of the *liṅgas*, with divine intervention in a mythical context, are much later embellishments. Inspired by strong influence of Brahminism,[19] to glorify and aggrandise the holy *liṅgas* and shrines, the local pundits framed up bizarre narratives punctuated with boring dialogues between the benign Hindu gods and the sanguine *ṛṣis* who seem to have little else to do than providing puranic legitimacy to the Śiva *liṅgas* in the Nepālamaṇḍala.

The *Nepāla-Mahātmya* also betrays another syndrome of later Brahminic texts in Nepal, written in clear reaction against Buddhist attempts to assimilate the Śiva *liṅgas* into the cultural jurisdiction of Newar Buddhism. For example, already in the earliest dated text of the *Svayambhū-Purāṇa*, dated Nepāl Saṃvat 644 (AD 1624), deposited at the Asiatic Society Library in Calcutta, there was an attempt to absorb the following eight famous Śiva *liṅgas* into the Buddhist cultural geography: 1. Maṇiliṅgeśsvara, 2. Gokarṇeśvara, 3. Kīeśvara, 4. Kumbheśvara, 5. Phaṅigarteśvara, 6. Phaṅiliṅgeśvara, 7. Garteśvara, and 8. Vikrameśvara. These palpable Śiva *liṅgas* were analysed and reinterpreted as Eight *Vītarāgas*, the Eight Passionless Beings, by the Buddhist myth-makers of the Nepal Valley. In the later lists of Śiva *liṅgas*, in response to this 'cultural imperialism' of the Buddhists, the number 8 is multiplied by 8 to make a total of 64 *liṅgas*, mainly to outdo the Buddhists in their own cultural game, as it were. If the Śaiva scribe in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* makes the

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19 See Uebach, 1970.

Buddha follow Pārvati's instructions and install a Śiva *liṅga* one should not have been surprised at all. That Newar Buddhists considered Śaivism as the single most powerful rival faith is all too evident from the verses which close a manuscript of the *Svayambhū-Purāṇa,* edited by Haraprasad Shastri.[20]

It is against this background that one must place the Śaiva texts such as the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*. One should not be astonished at the route of holy circumambulation prescribed in this text. It begins and ends with the shrine of Paśupati, making even the Buddhist shrines such as Vajrayogīnī a Śiva Sākta shrine, deserving a visit only *en route* to Paśupati temple, which becomes the be-all and end-all of the holy man's existence.

With all his academic credentials in linguistics, Mr Acharya does not even hesitate to recommend the attention of 'anthropolgists' to the folk interpretation of the word *Nepāla*, offered in the text of the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, 'because this land in the lap of the Himalayas was protected by the Muni Nemi, with pious deeds, it was named *Nepāla* (literally, protected by Nemi).'[21]

The *Ne-muni* of the *Paśupati Purāṇa* (XXII:1) has undergone a mysterious transformation into *Ne-mi* in the hands of the learned scribe who assembled the *Nepāla-Mahātmya* (XI:61).[22] The compiler of the *Gopālarāvaṃśāvalī* refers to *Nepa* the cowherd; the compiler of the 19th-century Buddhist *Vaṃśāvalā*, Padmagiri, interprets *Ne* as the Ādi Buddha. Evidently, *Ne-muni* has all the essential credentials of being a legitimate child of fertile scribal imagination.[23]

Mr Acharya deserves credit for diligently transliterating the Muralidhara Jha-Muktinatha Khanal text into roman. His translation into English may be faithful to the Sanskrit text published by Jha and emended by Mr Acharya, but not incontestable. This is evident from a cursory comparison of his English translation of the crucial Chapter I verses 57-67 with Brinkhaus's translation[24]. Like his 'grammatical improvements' in the original text, Mr Acharya seems also to take editorial liberties to improve upon the religious semantics of this

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20 *Svayambhū Purāṇa*, edited by Shastri, 1900, p. 500.
21 Acharya, 1992, p. 10.
22 *Paśupati Purāṇa*, XXII:1; *Nepāla- Mahātmya*, XI:61
23 See Malla 1983b, for the archaeology of the word, *Nepāla*.
24 Brinkhaus, 1980, p. 276-277.

Śaiva text to make it more readable to modern Western readers.

Assuming that Mr Jayaraj Acharya has either time or patience in the thick of his too-busy diplomatic assignments to peruse some of the popular 19th--century *Bhāṣa Vaṃśāvalīs*, composed between *ca*. the 1830s and the 1880s, he could have effortlessly identified all the Siva *liṅgas* mentioned in the *Nepāla-Mahātmya*, including, of course, the neglected and abandoned Somaliṅga, for which both Mr Acharya and his text lament so eloquently:

> Nobody really knows the importance of the Somaliṅga in the Kali Yuga.[25]

Perhaps. But not everyone is such an infidel even at this high noon of the Kali Yuga.

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25 Acharya, 1992, Preface, p. 6 and the text XVI: 33.

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26

Mānadeva Saṃvat: An Investigation into an Historical Fraud

Nullius in verba *(Don't take anybody's words for granted)*
—Motto of the Royal Society, London

There is no Manadeva II, King or Feudatory

Between Gaṇadeva (Saṃvat 479-487) and śivadeva I (Saṃvat 512-535) there is no king named Mānadeva. Although the gap is of about 25 years, there is no trace of 'Mānadeva II' in the Maṅgal Bazār, Pāṭan inscription of Bhāravi, dated Saṃvat 492, nor in Deśabhaṭṭārikā's śaṅkhamūla inscription, dated Saṃvat 495. Had there been an outstanding king, able to found an epoch era with the name, Mānadeva, this era should have been used, by śivadeva I, in his Viṣṇupādukā Phedi inscription of Saṃvat 512. At least, Jayadeva II's Paśupati inscription dated Saṃvat 157 should have mentioned him if there were an illustrous king able to found an epoch era which Jayadeva II himself had used.

'Mānadeva II' in the *Nepālavaṃśāvalī*, Kirkpatrick, Lévi, etc, is clearly a result of a scribal error which has been handed down to all the 19th-century *Bhāṣāvaṃśāvalīs*. This is quite clear from the comparison of the details mentioned about Gaṇadeva in the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* and of 'Mānadeva II' in *Nepālavaṃśāvalī*, i.e., Gaṇadeva>Manadeva> Mānadeva. Based on Kirkpatrick's summary of the *Nepālavaṃśāvalī*, Lévi wrote,

> Between Udayadeva and Gaṇadeva (Guṇakāmadeva), the Vaṃśāvalīs place Mānadeva II, under this reign Nepal suffered for three years

> from a terrible drought; Mānadeva brought an end to it by offering all his treasures to Paśupati. The Vaṃśāvalī of Kirkpatrick alone registers this tradition.[1]

Lévi's conclusion is based on the following summary by Kirkpatrick, in his 'Historical Sketch of Nepal',

> Maun Deo (the 2nd) 45 in whose reign Nepal was afflicted during three years with a severe drought, which ceased on the Rajah's propitiating the god Pusputty by an oblation of all his reaches.[2]

This summary by Kirkpatrick, in turn, is based on the following entry in the *Nepālavaṃśāvalī*,

> *Rājā śrīmānadeva varṣa 45//tena paśupatibhāṭṭārakāya varṣa trayaṃ nāvriṣṭiḥ vṛṣṭiākarṣanāmna koṣaṃ maṇiyuktaṃca dattavān//*
> (folio 5b lines 3-6)

This entry in *Nepālavaṃśāvalī* is based on the misreading of the following entry in the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*,

> *Rājāśrīgaṇadeva varṣa 45// tasya rājyeṃ nepālabhūmi varṣatrayaṃ anāvṛṣti vāriṣovṛṣti ākāṃkṣaṇāya kāmanenaḥ śrīpaśupatibhaṭṭārikāya mahānāga nirjityāh tasya maṇiyukte gaṇadeva nāma koṣa kritam praḍhokitam tatprabhāvāt mahāvṛṣti kritam prajā sukhī bhavati//*
> (folio 21a line 4-21b line 1)

At least from that point onward, the contamination of the *Vaṃśāvalī* tradition goes on uninterrupted. Beginning with Pandit Guṇānanda's (AD 1829) work,[3] to the *Vaṃśāvalīs* compiled in the 1890s, most of them invariably insert a king named Mānadeva as a son of Udayadeva, between Udayadeva and Gaṇadeva (or the chronicler's Guṇakāmadeva). In Siddhimān Siṃha Basnet's work (dated AD 1878), published under the title *Rājabhogamālā* (the National Archives Cat. No IV 332, another

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1 Lévi, 1905, Vol. II, p. 121.
2 Kirkpatrick, 1811, p. 260.
3 Wright, 1877.

copy in Leo E. Rose collection in the Berkeley Campus, University of California), this insertion is visibly done with the help of a correction mark at the bottom of folio 45a line 13, where the king's name is corrupted to Rājā Maṃdeva with a rule of 53 years. In the Kaiser Library, there is an interesting vernacular chronicle (No 9/1276) offered to General Kaiser by Pandit Rāmnāth Cālise of Mahottarī. Here King Mānadeva is recorded as the son of Udayadeva, with 25 as reginal years. Similarly, another text of *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī* (last record AD 1877) in our personal collection has the following entry,

> śrīmānadeva, years of rule 45. On hearing the former story of Vīr Vikramāditya Sen, the King re-introduced the Vikram Saṃvat all over the eastern and western dominions and made it famous everywhere. (folios 91-92)

Nearly the same text appears in the *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī* Part II edited by Lamsal where the King appears as Rājā Nandadeva, with only 13 years' rule.[4] Since every well-to-do family in Nepal has a copy of such chronicles, the contamination went on multiplying with every new copyist, almost *ad absurdum*.

Mānadeva Samvat: A Bogus Interpolation in the Text

'Māndevābda 304' is clearly a bogus interpolation in both the British Museum copy and the National Archives copy of *Sumatitantra*. There, the interpolation, a faint line in a later hand inserted at the bottom of the page, is all too evident. The correction mark, a *haṃsaapāda* at the top as well as at the bottom of the line 5 following the punctuation mark which concludes the line ending in *rājā krameṇatu*, is clearly visible. The post-colophon stray folio has *'Mānndevsya rājyābda 304'* by a recent scribe. In the British Museum copy, this is a prose line in the midst of verses in Anustubha metre. Probably, it is an elaboration of a verse similar to the modern *Sūrya Siddhānta*, Chapter I: 23 which enjoins that

> In the present twenty-eighth, Age, this Golden Age is past: from this point, reckoning up the time, one should compute together the whole number.[5]

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4 Lamsal, 1966, p. 1.

5 Burgess, 1860/1997, p. 13.

As *Sumatitantra* is a *tantra*, its six ways of calculating *ahargaṇa* (literally, total number of mean civil days elapsed since the beginning of the Kali) begins from the start of the Kali Yuga, expressing the expired years of the Kali as *'bhaviṣyam sampravakṣāmi kalikaúca yathākramam'*, i.e., 'introducing the future Kali years in a sequence'.

śaṅkaranārāyaṇa (ca. AD 825-900) of Quilon, in Kerala, rose to eminence through his commentary on *Laghubhāskrīya*, and later appointed chief court astronomer of Ravivarman of the Cera dynasty of Kerala. He quotes a verse from ācārya Sumati in his *Vivaraṇa* on *Laghubhāṣkarīya* (dated AD 869), in connection with lunar and solar eclipses, ten years before the so-called Mānadeva Saṃvat 304. This line is clearly an interpolation in the *Sumatitantra* texts. These texts give the mean positions of the planets of midnight of Saturday/Sunday, March 20/21, AD 505 in Avanti.

The *Sumatitantra* gives an R-Sine Table with 90 divisions of a quadrant, one for each degree of the arc. It is sometimes accurate up to the 12th decimal place (e.g., 889 for 15^0, 1790 for 30^0, 2431 for 45^0, 2977 for 60^0) whereas for other degrees the text only gives round figures by ignoring decimal points lower than 0.50 (e.g., 3321 for 75^0). Most classics on Indian astronomy dated before Vaṭeśvara (b. AD 880) give 24 Sines for a quadrant, with the value of Radius = 3438. This is so in *Paitāmaha Siddhānta*, Aryabhaṭa I, Brahmagupta, Lalla, and modern *Sūrya Siddhānta*. The Sines for other degrees can, of course, be derived on the basis of the 24 Sine tables, and smaller decimal points are inevitable if lesser arcs are taken as units. Varāhamihira, on the other hand, gives Sines for a radius of 120 with 225″ as interval. As the table differs from all others, including the one given by Varāhmihira, the text of *Sumatitantra* seems to be infested with interpolations by later hands.

Of the two available copies of the text, the copy in the National Archives is by three different hands, copied for the second time, as mentioned clearly in its colophon. In the British Museum copy, there are a number of folios with lines erased, added, and the whole folios erased after having copied them. A number of folios are also blank. A number of folios are post-colophon, such as 121a-b, 122a-b and 123a-b. The folio 124a-b has no corresponding equivalent in the National Archives copy. At the end of it comes another colophon which dates the text to 16 days later. The first colophon dates the text on *Saṃvat 476 Pauṣa śukla 9;* the second one dates on *Saṃvat 476 Pauṣa Kṛṣṇa 10*. There are 124 folios in

this recension. All folios are numbered in letters consecutively on the left hand side and in numerals on the right hand side.

In the National Archives copy, on the other hand, there are 152 folios; folios 13a and 13b are missing, and after 15a there are three folios which are unrelated to the context. Up to 143b folio there is consecutive numbering—first in letters up to folio 62b, then in decimal numerals up to the end. Decimal numbering is also used in the main text. This corrupt and contaminated manuscript has been copied at least by two different hands on different kinds of palm.

Unlike the popular Caitrādi expired śaka (computed from Tuesday, March 3, AD 78), the so-called 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' is none other than Kārttikādi current śaka which is to be computed from Thursday, October 18, AD 76. Kārttikādi śaka was also prevalent in Saurāṣtra. It is referred to by Bhāṣkara I (AD 550-629) in his *āryabhatīya-bhāṣya* (folio 127 of the transcript from the two manuscripts in Malayalam script in the collection of the Government Library of Oriental Manuscripts, Madras, No R-14850). First used by Aṃśuvarmā and his successors, it is a *lokakāla*, with 500 dropped from the total current year. śaka Saṃvat, the astronomer's era *par excellence*, too, was a *lokakāla*, begun with the figure for a century left out in computation. Al-Biruni notes,

> Common people in India date by the years of a *centennium* which they call *saṃvatsara*. If a *centennium* is finished, they drop it, and simply begin to date by a new one. This era is called *lokakāla* i.e., the era of the nation at large. But of this era people give such totally different accounts, that I have no means of making out the truth.[6]

All current eras begin one year before the expired one. In Kārttikādi saṃvat, Kārttika comes before Caitra whereas in Caitrādi saṃvat Caitra comes before Kārttika. Only five months are common to both the systems, i.e., Kārttika, Mārgaśīrṣa, Pauṣa, Māgha and Phālguṇa, whereas the uncommon ones are Caitra, Vaiśākha, Jyeṣṭha, āṣāḍha, śrāvaṇa, Bhādra and āśvina. So, the conversion of one era into another is not such a simplistic addition/subtraction arithmetical operation as made of it by some 'authorities'.[7]

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6 Al-Biruni, 1910, Vol II, Chapter XLVIII.

7 See Bhandari, *Pūrṇimā*, 103, 2058 Pauṣa BS, pp. 2-13.

Aṃṣuvarmā, most likely under the influence of Harṣa Saṃvat which is also Kārttikādi, current and *amānta,* began to use the then prevalent era with 500 left out after year 529. So far, in the last 144 years, we have not found a single inscription dated between Samvat 1 to 28. Nor is there any reasonable argument for launching an epoch era with Saṃvat 29. Obviously, Aṃśuvarmā just dropped the figure for hundreds and used the current epoch era. Several scholars had speculated such a possibility as early as Bhagwanlal Indraji.[8] Aṃśuvarmā makes it more than clear when he instals a gold repoussé *kvaca* image of Garuḍanārāyaṇa at Cāṅgu where the date is mentioned as

> *Oṁ ekatriṃśattme varṣe* ***vartamāne svasaṃsthayā***
> *māghaśuklatrayodaśyāṃpuṣyeṇa saviturdine*

The late Dhanavajra Vajrācārya as well as his guru, the late Pandit Nayarāja Pant, were both unable to interpret the correct meaning of the words *vartamane* and *svasaṃsthayā* because both believed in the so-called 'Mānadeva Saṃvat'. They thought that the words qualified the *kavaca*, set up at present, rather than the epoch era. The current epoch years are qualified with words such as *pravartmāne* or *vartamāne* whereas expired ones are prefixed or followed by words such as *gate, atite, pratite, yute,* etc.[9]

When Franz Kielhorn calculated 200 Vikrama Saṃvat inscriptions with weekdays from India and 29 Nepāla Saṃvat inscriptions with weekdays from Nepal, he found that some are verifiable as current years and others as expired ones, while a number of inscriptions, both from India and Nepal, have irregular dates that cannot be verified.[10]

Of the 29 Nepalese inscriptions with weekdays examined and computed by Kielhorn, four have years mentioned as expired. The words used are *gate, prayāte, yāte and yute.* 19 have expired years without any appellation, and two are dated according to the current year without mentioning it. Others were irregular ones. In the case of the Vikrama Era, of the 200 inscriptions Kielhorn examined, 50 have irregular dates:

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8 Indraji, 1885, p. 45.

9 On the subject of current year and expired year and their conversion, see Sewell and Dikshit, 1896, p. 40; Pillai, 1922, pp. 52-53; Ketkar, 1923, pp. 18-19.

10 Kielhorn, 1890 and 1888.

some are regular by one siddhānta, irregular by another; some dates are doubtful readings; some are with a wrong weekday; some will work only if the immediately following year is taken into consideration. Some tally only if the preceding year is considered. Some work with *amāntamāna*, others with *pūrṇimāntmāna;* both also have a Southern and Northern variety. All these variations in dating the inscriptions are in the Vikrama Saṃvat.

It will, therefore, be naive generalisation if we assume that in all the Licchavi inscriptions, particularly with intercalation, the dates are all regular, uniform, and absolutely flawless renderings and readings. Not all the inscriptions are uniformly preserved. There is a serious problem of illegible and variant readings by different epigraphists—both in the case of numerals and ligatures (e.g., where Gnoli read Gaṇadeva, Dhanavajra reads Gaṅgādeva, in the Capaligaon Inscription, dated Saṃvat 489 śrāvaṇa śukla 12). In some inscriptions or documents the same epoch year may be expired whereas in others they can be verified only as current years. This task is made less than surmountable by the fact that of the 200+ Licchavi inscriptions, only two have weekdays.

The current year begins with month 1 year 1, whereas the expired one begins with year 0, day 1 of month 1 and becomes year 1 and month 13 in the 13th month only. As most inscriptions in Nepal or India do not explicitly mention whether the given year is the current one or the expired one, the only way to ascertain a given date is to compute all the available elements of *paúcāṅga*, i.e, *tithi, vāra, nakṣatra, karaṇa* and *yoga*, if they are explicitly mentioned in an inscription. As Pillai puts it,

> The weekday is the crucial test in the vast majority of verifiable Indian dates and in the absence of a weekday, an Indian date is usually pronounced unverifiable; unless there is an eclipse on that date. Where we have a date that merely gives a *tithi*, a *nakṣatra*, and a year without the week-day, we say that the day cannot be verified, i.e., proved free from the probability of error, because every year must contain such a *tithi*, and such a *nakṣatra*, we cannot assert with any degree of confidence that the year-data is free from error.[11]

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11 Pillai, 1922, pp. 4-5.

Or, as Ketkar puts it,

> Citations about *Saṃvatsaras*, months, *tithis* are not sufficient for the determination of a date. Details about the era: whether the *saṃvat* is current at the *Meṣādi* or at date; whether the date is expired or current; whether *Caitrādi* or *Kārttikādi;* whether the date is derived from the *Sūrya Siddhānta* or *Arya Siddhānta;* these details should be clearly and fully made out before commencing the calculation. These are the uncertainties that often beset the work of an epigraphist.[12]

Unfortunately for us, there are only two documents from ancient Nepal, one the gold repoussé inscription dated Current Kārttikādi Saṃvat 31 Māgha śukla 13 Sunday when the Moon was in Puṣya nakṣatra (verified by Regmi, for Sunday, February 4, AD 608[13]); the second one, a colophon dated Expired Kārttikādi Samvat 301 Vaiśākha śukla 7 Sunday, while the Moon was in Puṣya Nakṣatra and the Yoga was Siddha (verified by Petech, for Sunday 13, AD 878[14]; wrongly verified for Sunday April 23, AD 878 by Regmi[15]; but rightly verified by himself for AD 878 April 13, Sunday earlier in the text[16]). We believe that these two documents with weekdays were verified by the two historians using Pillai's tables (1911/1922). We have also cross-checked both the dates by using Jacobi, 1892, Sewell and Dikshit, 1896, Ketkar, 1923, and Sewell, 1926. Except for a small variation of a few *ghatikās* and *palas*, their verifications are found as correct ones.

Of all the newly found Licchavi inscriptions, just a little over a dozen in the last 33 years, none has a weekday. Even if all other elements of the Hindu calendar are mentioned, such as *nakṣatra* or *muhūrta* as in the Cāṅgu Inscription of Mānadeva, dated Saṃvat 386 *Jyeṣṭha śukla Pratipad, Abhijit muhūrta*, with the Moon in the *Rohiṇī nakṣatra*, its date cannot be verified as totally free from error because such astronomical conjunctions are not rare. So, the late Pundit Nayarāj Pant's claim that he successfully calculated the date of this inscription on the basis of

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12 Ketkar, 1923, pp. 80-81.
13 Regmi, 1983, p. 268.
14 Petech, 1984, p. 29.
15 Regmi, 1983, p. 268.
16 Regmi, 1983, p. 23.

Jyautiṣa vedāṅga does not carry any significance. Similar claims had been made in the past by other authorities using different *siddhāntas*, and epoch eras.

For instance, Shankar Man Rājvaṃśī calculated these two Licchavi documents with weekdays by using his own theory of a Licchavi Era founded 22 years before the founding of śaka Era in AD 78. He came up with the following startling results: AD 442 April 27 Monday for Mānadeva's Cāṅgu inscription, AD 584 February 19 Sunday for the Aṃśuvarmā's repoussé inscription, and AD 854 April 6 Sunday for the colophon of the *Sauśrutī Saṃhitā Sahottaratantra*. He claimed that all the elements given in the inscription and the colophon match perfectly well with his own theory of the Licchavi Era founded in AD 56 and the Aṃśuvarmā Era founded in AD 552.[17] In his magnum opus, Nayarāj Pant himself wrote,

> In the past, all have claimed that they had verified the date in the Cāṅgu inscription of Mānadeva. Such date occurs 6-7 times within a century. So it is clear that conclusions cannot be drawn on the basis of such computations of dates.[18]

The Tibetan Text Does Not Mention 'Mānadeva II'

Among the so-called four evidences in support of the 'Mānadeva Saṃvat', the Tibetan text does not mention Mānadeva at all. On the contrary, bSo nams rtse mo (AD 1142-1182) mentions that Aṃśuvarmā counted years from śaka 438 (probably a misinterpretation of 498, resulting out of misreading *candra* for *randhra,* because *candra* also means 3), and 242 years after the appearance of Amśuvarmā, King Khri gtsugs lde btsan (Ral pa cen) came to power. The relevant quote from the text is the following:

> The Buddha entered womb in the fire-rabbit year and was born in the iron-dragon year. He got the perfect enlightenment in the water-tiger year and entered Nirvana in the process of beginning the earth-mouse year (2133 BC). 137 years later, King Nanda appeared. This account occurred in *Tarkajvālā* (= Toh.3856). After 800 years from this King,

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17 Rājavaṃśī, 1970, pp. 43-47.

18 Nayarāj Pant et al, 1987, p. 556.

> Candragupta appeared. 132 years after him, King śūdraka appeared. After him, counting years, when 274 years passed by, the Nepalese continued to count years after it, and still after 438 (498?) years, King Aṃśuvarman appeared. After him, by counting years, when 242 years passed by, it reaches King Khri gtsugs lde btsan's reign.
>
> (bSod names rtse mo: 1968: folio 315b line 1 -folio 316a line 4.)

Instead of lending support to 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' this chronology completely falsifies it. Among Tibetan historians, there is a controversy as to when Ral pa cen actually came to power, in AD 814 (*The Blue Annals* by gZon nu dpal, compiled in AD 1476-78), or in 817 (*Bod kyi rgyal rabs*, compiled by Gras pa rgyal mtshan, in AD 1545), or in AD 823 (*Chos b'yung*, compiled by Buston, in 1322). The short chronology is based on the Buddha's Nirvana in the year 2133 BC. bSo nams rtse mo says that he noted down the chronology from the colophon of the Tibetan translation of Vāvaviveka's (ca. AD 450) *Tarkajvālā* by Atiśā and Jayaśila (*Nag lo cha ba*). It cannot, however, be traced in the T'angur, dbu-ma No 3856 = Toh (or mDo Edition XIX 2 K 96/5256/19-4-7 on folio 40B7-329B2).

In Tibet, prior to the adoption of the system based on *Kālacakratantra*, derived from the 60-year cycle of Jupiter, there was a calendar named *me-kha-gya-tsho* (Skt. *agni.-ambara-abdhi*, i.e., 403). As Lévi puts it,

> the word is a compound of numeral symbols: *me* , the fire, expresses 3; *kha*, the space, 0; *gya-tsho*, the lakes, 4; *me kha gya tsho* signifies 403. Read according to the Indo-Tibetan method, *me kha gya tsho* signified 403, and 403 deducted from AD 1025 would then be AD 622. But I have already more than once pointed out to what extent these expressions in numerical symbols lend themselves to inversion of figures. If one rephrases the hypothesis as *Kha me gya-tsho* one will read 430 instead of 403. It is the very date I was led to by astronomical calculation to the year AD 595 as the epoch year of the Thakuri Era.[19]

Lévi refers to one of the fundamental rules of Indian chronology, *aṅkānāṃ vāmto gatiḥ*, according to which the figures rendered by indicative words are to be counted backward, but the Tibetan historical tradition began

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19 Lévi, 1905, Vol II, p. 154.

to adopt this tradition only after mid-seventeenth century. So, we have to calculate the numeral nominals according to the sequence of the given words. It would have resulted in (AD 1025-304) AD 622—the date of founding of the Hijri Era (July 15, 622). That date would have upset Lévi's own theory.

Petech's Puppet Theory

The authenticity of this theory is just as doubtful as Luciano Petech's own 'puppet theory'. He claims that Aṃśuvarmā launched this epoch era by placing on the throne a puppet of his—a 'Mānadeva II'. In his own words,

> In 576 Aṃśuvarman, then the man behind the throne, installed a puppet of his, Mānadeva, followed later by Guṇaḳāmadeva. Both are mentioned in Kirkpatrick's *vaṃśāvalī* as the immediate predecessors of śivadevaà Then śivadeva was placed on the throne. But in 606 he was deposed or died, and Aṃśuvarman began to rule without a puppet king, employing (or starting) the era of his first protṛgṛ Mānadeva...The Mānadeva of 576 was the first Buddhist king.[20]

Why would an ambitious regent use his puppet's epoch era is none too clear to us. In the whole Indian sub-continent there is hardly any evidence of a feudatory under a paramount ruler launching an epoch era.

Nayarāj Pant's Vintage Theory: Mahāsāmanta Manadeva II

The above theory is as good as Nayarāj Pant's vintage theory that 'Mānadeva II', the imaginary founder of the epoch era, was a powerful *mahāsāmanta*, not a king.

> In AD 576, when the reigning kings were too weak, the chief feudatory *(mahāsāmanta)* Manadeva II, took power in his own hands and also founded an epoch era. This epoch era is known as Mānadeva Saṃvat. Its use continued for 300 years.[21]

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20 Petech, 1961, p. 230.
21 Pandey and Pant, 1947, pp. 13-14.

The Rāguru's Theory: Epoch Era of Mānadeva I

Similarly, the late Hem Rāj Pāndey thought that the epoch era mentioned in *Sumatitantra* was founded by Mānadeva I. 'The Rājaguru was of the opinion that this Mānadeva for whom he supplied the date from the manuscript was the Mānadeva of Cāngu Nārāyṇa and that it proved a Mānadeva Era which was the era used by Aṃśuvarmā'—a theory which Kāshi Prasād Jayaswāl politely turned down.[22]

Distorting these historical facts, Nayarāj Pant and his school enlist the name of Hemrāj Pandey as the first proposer of the so-called 'Mānadeva Samvat'. Clearly, he was not proposing a Mānadeva II; he was proposing Mānadeva I as the founder of a new epoch era in śaka 498/AD 576.

The Historian-Laureate's Theory: The Non-existent Rupavarmā

Almost similar is the nature of the late Historian-Laureate Kharidār Bāburām Ācārya's theory that Mānadeva Saṃvat was founded by Aṃśuvarmā in the memory of his father, Rupavarmā, who probably belonged to the royal line of Vṛṣadeva![23] He continued to believe in this theory in his essay on 'Nepal's Relations with China and Tibet', where he wrote,

> In Nepal, upto AD 576, all political power was controlled by the Abhīras. In this very year Rupavarmā took the support of a Licchavi prince born in that family and suppressed the Abhīras. Around AD 587 Aṃśuvarmā became a ruler succeeding the Licchavi prince. In AD 606 the coronation of Aṃśuvarmā took place, and he founded a new epoch era beginning from AD 576.[24]

Ācārya fails to explain why Amśuvarmā did not launch his epoch era from Year 1. We are kept in dark about what happened during the interval of Year 1 and 28. In an interview he gave to Professor T.R. Vaidya, the late Dhanavajra Vajrācārya, Bāsudeva Tripāthi and Churāmani Bandhu, on April 23, 1970 at his residence, Acārya says,

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22 Jayaswāl, 1936, p. 36.
23 Acharya, 1949, p. 8.
24 Acārya, 1956, pp. 8-9.

> In Saṃvat 528 Aṃśuvarmā came to power. After that for the convenience of computation, he dropped the century figure 5 and continued with number 28 and so on.[25]

Acārya names the Saṃvat used by Mānadeva and his successors as Kośānu Saṃvat and the one used by Aṃśuvarmā and his successors by dropping the century figure 'Later Kośānu Saṃvat'. Thus, in complete defiance of Ācārya's views as well as Hemrāj Pāndey's view, Nayarāj Pant and his school enlist both Bāburām Ācārya and Hemarāj Pandey as the co-propounders of the so-called 'Mānadeva Samvat'. The Pants have been hitherto cashing in on this concocted historical fraud. These distortions of facts were solely motivated by the urge to prove all other scholars wrong and their school alone as right in everything they publish.

Pandit Nayarāj's Theory of 'Māndeva Samvat'

While there is such a disappointing confusion among eminent scholars, Nayarāj Pant boldly wrote in the Preface to their edition/transcription of the *Sumatitantra*,

> Sumatitantrasyopalambhādaṃśuvarmādibhiḥ prayuktaḥ saṃvatsaro mānadevasaṃvatsara iti naipālakā vidvāṃsaḥ svīcakruḥ[26]
> (As attested in the Sumatitantra, the Mānadeva Saṃvat used by Aṃśuvarmā and his successors is accepted by all Nepali scholars.)

This is only a happy conclusion arrived at by a *mahāvidyāvāridhī.*

While we were working on a facsimile edition of the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* in 1984, we realised the need of verifying Mānadeva II Saṃvat for preparing an acceptable chronology of the Licchavis.[27] Vajrācārya already had doubts about a Mānadeva II, so that 'it is somewhat inconvenient to call this epoch era as Mānadeva Saṃvat. But we have not been able to ascertain what happened during the time between śaka śaṃvat 498 and 512'.[28] Although both the

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25 Sharma, Vajracarya and Thakur, 1973, pp. 24-25.
26 Pant et al, 1978, p. 27.
27 See Vajrācārya and Malla, 1985, p. 235.
28 Vajrācārya, 1973, pp. 299-300.

editors had reservations on this issue, we let it go. In a couple of later publications as well, we saw no need to check the sources, particularly the Tibetan, because we took the words of a well-known Tibetologist and those of Nayarāj Pant for granted. Now, we realise how wrong both of us were in assuming that there was a 'Mānadeva II' who launched an epoch era in AD 576! This paper is only a small *prāyaścitta* for this big mistake.

Historical Facts and *Sumatitantra's* Figures

The British Museum copy of the *Sumatitantra* has the following lines,

Jāto duryodhano rājā kalisandhyam pravartate/
Yudhiṣṭhiro mahārājo duryodhanastayopi vā//
Ubhau rājau sahasre dve varṣantu sampravarttati/
Nandarājyaṃ śatāṣṭaúca ścandraguptastatopare/
Rājyaṅkaroti tenāpi dvātriṃśaccādhikaṃ śatam/
Rājā śūdrakadevaśca varṣasaptābdhi cāśvinou//
śakarājā tatopaścādvasurandhra kritantathā/
Ityate bhāṣitammahyaṃ júayā rājā krameṇa tu//
Seṣā yutāśca kṛta ambarāgni 304 śrī mānadevābda pryujyamānā etāni piṇḍa kali- varṣamāhuḥ//
(Folio 2b-3a)

The above text has been transcribed, translated and interpreted differently by different Nepali and foreign historians of Nepal, depending on how, for instance, one translates the word, *sampravarttate*. Yet, the fact remains that not a single of the figures for the six epoch eras mentioned in the *Sumatitantra*—Yudhiṣṭhira 2000, Nanda 800, Candragupta 132, śudraka 247, śaka 498, and Mānadeva 304—matches with the known historical facts. In the first place, it is not clear from the various translations of the word *sampravartte* whether these figures refer to the duration of the rule of a king (as the text intends?), or of the dynasty (as Petech thought), or of the use of the epoch year (as the Pants think). If the intention was to specify the duration of a king's reign or rule (as suggested by *candraguptastatopare// rājyaṅkaroti tenāpi dvāriṃśaccādhikaṃ śatam//*), i.e., thereafter Candragupta will rule for 132 years, then it is clearly a pious fabrication. Jayaswāl, who first published this text in 1936, claimed,

> It is clear that the author of the chronology took chief reigns as landmarks, and not always eras. There were Yudhiṣṭhira Era, Nanda, and śaka Eras, but there was no Chandragupta Era, there was no Sudraka Era. There is no trace of an Era of Mānadeva I.[29]

If the intention of the scribe was to indicate the duration of an epoch year, implying that śaka Saṃvat will last upto 498 only, clearly śaka Saṃvat continued to be used in Licchavi inscriptions from Saṃvat 512 to 535 by śivadeva and to Saṃvat 536, side by side with the so-called 'Mānadeva Era" by Aṃśuvarmā.

As known to modern historians, much of ancient Indian history before the invasion of Alexander the Great (328-326 BC) is mostly a core of hard facts surrounded by a thick pulp of disputable interpretations of the extant literary and archeological sources. Mahāpadma Nanda, the founder of the Nanda dynasty, ruled between ca. 362-320 BC; Candragupta Maurya, between ca. 321-298 BC; the Sātavāhan dynasty, founded by King Simuka, ruled between ca. 50 BC to 250 AD; and śūdraka, the founder of Andhra Dynasty, ruled between ca. AD 350-400. The Scythian Kuṣāṇas or śakas, used at least three different eras. The first one was founded in 123 BC, using Macedonian months and Greco-Chaldean method of date recording. In the first three centuries of their rule, the śakas used the old era with hundreds omitted. But they also began to use Indian months and the Kharoṣṭhī script. The classical śaka era, starting from Tuesday, March 3, AD 78, is nothing but the old śaka era, starting from 123 BC with 200 omitted, so that the year 1 of Kaniṣka is year 201 of the old śaka era, though the qualification, śālivāhana, is attached to it much later. This epoch year itself is a *lokakāla*, an abridged one for śaka 201. Jayaswal, who first published the *Sumatitantra* chronology was not too sure of its historical relevance because,

> The year for the commencement of the Nanda-Rājya was hopelessly wide off the mark. The dates for the commencement of the Maurya kingdom and the Sātavāhana kingdom are short by about 22 years.[30]

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29 Jayaswal, 1936, p. 42.
30 Jayaswal, 1936, p. 42.

In Licchavi Nepal, the śaka era continued to be used, with the figure for the centuries omitted, till the beginning of Nepāla Saṃvat. (For early Indian Chronology and Calendar, see R. Morton Smith, 'Ancient Indian Chronology', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 77 No. 2, 1957, pp. 276-280; Van Lohuizen de Leeuw, *The 'Scythian' Period* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949; M.N. Saha, 'Different Methods of Date Recording in Ancient and Medieval India, and the Origin of the śaka Era', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Letters Vol. XIX No 1, 1953; Etienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Buddhisme Indien. Des origins a l'Era śaka* [Louvain: Institut Orientaliste de l'Universite de Louvain, 1958]; and David Pingree, 'A Note on the Calendars Used in Early Indian Inscriptions.' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 102 No. 2, 1982, pp. 355-359).

From the Beginning of the Kali to the Composition of the Text

Although it is a tantra based on mathematical astronomy, the framework of the *Sumatitantra* is purāṇic. Mahes Rāj Pant's excavation of a brahmaṛiṣī named Sumati from among the mourners lined up at the deathbed of Bhīṣmapitāmaha in the Mahābhārata War is laudable on its own, but its use to defend the purāṇic veneer of the text is rather unfortunate. The purāṇic bias of the text is evident, not only from the opening verses, but also from its history, cosmogony and geography.

The main function of the chronology planted in the *Sumatitantra* appears to be to add up to the total years lapsed between the beginning of the Kali Yuga (i.e., Friday 17/18 February 3101 BC) and the imagined date of composition of the text in question. The total comes out to be 3981 years, mainly to facilitate the computation of the *ahargaṇa*. The historical use of these figures is virtually nil because these figures are based on the Purāṇic lists of various dynasties of the Kali Yuga. Despite Pargiter's admirable patience in attempting to reconstruct an acceptable chronology out of these Purāṇic lists,[31] there is a virtual chaos among various *purāṇas* and *upapurāṇas*. For example, *Matsya Purāṇa* says that Mahāpadma Nanda ruled for 88 years whereas *Vāyu Purāṇa* says that he ruled for 28 years. Pargiter assigns 80 years to the Nandas,[32] and *Sumatitantra* claims that the Nandas ruled for 800 years. No sensible

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31 Pargiter, 1913.

32 Pargiter, 1922, p. 287.

historian can take these figures too seriously. However, Nayarāj Pant was so credulous about the authenticity of these figures that he quotes the *Sumatitantra* to give the date of Candragupta Maurya![33] This is only an example of Nayarāj Pant's sanguinity and complete uncritical faith in his sources. It is not for nothing that R.G. Collingwood wrote in his classic, *The Idea of History,* saying, 'In so far as an historian accepts the testimony of an authority and treats it as historical fact, he obviously forfeits the name of historian; but we have no other name by which to call him.'[34]

Nepāla saṃvat

Nepāla saṃvat was founded, not in the imaginary year 304, nor in śaka 802, as implied by *Sumatitantra*, but on Kārttika śukla Pratipad of current Saṃvat 303, i.e., Kārttkādi current śaka 803, i.e., on Tuesday, October 20, AD 879. On that day, the Moon was in the Anurādhā Nakṣatra for 20 hours and 23 minutes after the mean sunrise in Kathmandu, and śovana Yoga continued between lunation 1481-1852. After the mean sunrise in Kathmandu, the śukla Pratipad tithi lasted for 22 hours 8 minutes. This date is 7 months later than the beginning of Caitrādi *expired śaka* 801. Lévi speculated that it was also a *lokakāla,* with 800 left out because the Nepalese thought that the number 8 was inauspicious.[35]

The verses in the *Sumatitantra*, giving different fictitious numbers for different rulers, or eras, or the duration of a dynasty must have been an elaboration by a Nepali scribe, with a smattering of Jyautiṣavidyā, upon the original verse which probably gave a plain formula to arrive at the time duration between the beginning of the Kali and the composition of the given *Karaṇa,* not dissimilar to Chapter I Verse 23 of new *Sūrya Siddhānta* which explicitly enunciates: *ataḥ kālam prasaṅkhyāya saṅkhyāmekatra piṇḍyet*, i.e., add up all the past years between the present and the beginning of the Kali Yuga. At any rate, the figure 802, to be added or deducted from Nepāla Saṃvat to get an integer with śaka Saṃvat, is only a round figure for 801 year 7 months. This was necessary for all *paúcāṅga*-makers as well as for astronomers—the śaka era being the standard era in use among astronomers in India and Nepal.

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33 See Pant, 1990, p. 10.
34 Collingwood, 1941, p. 252.
35 Lévi, 1905, Vol II, pp. 181-183.

A Likely Copyist: An Hypothesis

On the basis of a preliminary digital scanning of the manuscripts copied by Jayaśihamalla Varman and the British Museum copy of the *Sumatitantra,* one is tempted to believe that these figures were added by the copyist Jayaśihamalla Varman of Nhola Vihāra in Pāṭan because he was also the author of *Sumati-karaṇa,* the transcriber of *Khaṇḍakhādyaka* (Cat III Vi 52, dated NS 470 Bhādrapada 2-3), Vrihajjātaka *(Bṛhajjātaka)* (Cat. Vi 262, dated NS 471 śāvaṇa sudi 4/5), *Bhojadevasaṃgraha* (dated NS 472 Kārttika Kṛṣṇa 5/6), and probably also of *Jyotirājakaraṇa* in the National Library (No 699 Vi 30, dated śaka 1304/AD 1382, copied by a later hand in NS 543 Bhādra śukla 10/AD 1423.) Assuming such high-flown *virudha* as *bhagnarājasthāpanārtha// lubdharājagajāṅkuśa/ śaraṇāgatavajrapaúíjarā,* he also copied some literary texts such as *Hariścandropākhyāna, Mahīrāvaṇavadha,* and Dharmagupta's *Rāmāṅkanātikā.*

The Equation of *Kanyāadvīpa* with *Nepālamaṇḍala*

The late Pandit Nayarāj Pant believed that the author of the *Sumatitantra* gave the latitude of his country as 27 degrees and its longitude as 1 ghatikā and 58 pala (47.2 minutes East of the Prime Meridian). If Nayarāj was right then he was so only if *Kanyādvīpa* or *Kaumārīdvīpa, Kanyākhaṇḍa* or *Kanyākhyaḥ* was a mythical name for Nepal. However, nowhere in the text the name of the country, *Nepāla,* is mentioned. On the contrary, in a chapter on *tripraśnādhikāra* (time, place and direction), Sumati says that of the nine divisions of Bhāratavarṣa,

> Kanyādvīpa lies to the south of Mount Meru and on its southern end lies the Malaya mountain; there flows the river Lavanāśru, i.e., salty waters. It is ruled by King Bhujagāsana. At its foot lies Laṅkā, the home of demons, with walls and archways made of gold, studded with various wonderful metals.
>
> (Folio 48b verses 6-7 in the British Museum copy)

Vaṭeśvara (b. AD 880) writes in his *Siddhānta,*

> Laṅkā (then northwards) *Kumārī,* then Kāúci, Māṇāṭa, Aśvetapuri, then northwards, the śveta mountain, thereafter Vātsyagulma, the city of Avantī, then Gargarāṭa, Aśramapattana,. Mālvanagara, Paṭṭaśiva, Rohitaka, Sthānviśvara, the Himalayan Mountains and lastly

Meru,—(these are situated on the prime meridian). For these places correction for longitude is not needed.[36]

śripati (ca. AD 999) in his *Siddhanta-śekara* (II: 995-996) lists the following places as lying on the prime meridian,

Laṇkā, ***Kumārī,*** Kāúci, Pānāṭa, Sitādri, ṣaḍāsya, Vatsagulma, Māhiṣmatī, Ujjayinī, Paṭṭaśiva, Gargarāṭa, Rohita, Sthāṇiśvara, Sītāgiri, and Sumeru.

Do these geographical descriptions fit Nepal? Certainly not, nor is Nepālamaṇḍala ever considered the Prime Meridian in Indian astronomy.

What Nayarāj Pant had done with the Sumati's text, in the name of emendation, is an indefensible act of convenient rewriting. He had re-written the text to suit his theory,

Kanyākhaṇḍaikabhagasya dhṛtavarṇāaāśramasthiteḥ/ Nepāladroṇyabhikhyasya deśasyāasya viśeṣataḥ// [37]

for the following in the Sumati's text where there is no mention whatsoever of the Nepal Valley :

Viśeṣena pravakṣyāmi kanyādvīpasya niścayaṃ

The *Sanskrit-Nepali Comprehensive Dictionary* published by Mahendra Sanskrit University, defines *Kumārikākhaṇḍam* (based on the *Skandapurāṇa*) as the terrestrial division which was given as a share to the daughter of King śataśṛṅga, after having divided the earth among eight sons of his.[38]

No known text or dictionary of place-names, purāṇic or otherwise, calls Nepal the *Kanyādvīpa* or *Kaumāridvīpa*, *Kumārīkhaṇḍa* or *Kumārīkhyaḥ*. According to Apte's *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, *Kumārīkāḥ* is the name of the southern extremity of the Indian peninsula. cf., the modern name Cape of Comorin.[39]

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36 VS I.8, pp. 1-2 in Kripa Shankar Shukla's translation, 1957.
37 Pant et al, 1978, p. 14; 1987, p. 128.
38 Pandey, 2000, p. 306.
39 Apte, 1957, p. 583.

If this is so, then the whole point of Nayarāj Pant's argument that *Kanyādvīpa, Kumārīdvīpa, Kānyakhaṇḍa* is the Nepal Valley and that its latitude is 27 degrees North of Equator and 1.58 *ghatikā* East of Ujjainī stands as unfounded.

Why would ācārya Sumati call his country *Kanyādvīpa* or *Kaumārīdvīpa*, a sort of euphemism for a country when Nepal was an already known place-name by the time of Samudragupta (AD 335-374) in India, or Vasantadeva (AD 504-530) in Nepal, not to mention the references in the classical Indian texts of great antiquity such as Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata*, Kauṭalya's *Arthaśāstra*, or Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* or Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*. *Nepāla*, certainly was not an unknown place-name at that time, nor was it a taboo word among the astronomers in the sub-continent.[40] If by any chance, *Kanyādvīpa* or *Kaumārīdvīpa* is Nepal, why cannot, for instance, the eastern region of Tibet be *Kanyādvīpa* because a 7th century Chinese source, *Fa-iouen-tchou-lin*, the famous *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* compiled and completed by Tao-cheu, in AD 668, notes the following about *Strīrājya*,

> Lately the orders of the (Chinese) Empire faded out of the Kingdom (of Nepal), and spread elsewhere in distant lands. Now, it is dependent on Tu-fan (Tibet). On the east, the Kingdom of Women is adjacent to Tu-fan.[41]

The Latitude and Longitude are of Kanyādvīpa, Not of Nepalamaṇḍala

There are scores of cities which lie 27 degrees North of Equator or 47.2 minutes East of a given Prime Meridian. In calculating the longitude of the so-called *Kanyādvīpa*, the Nayarāj Pant resorts to an equally odd expediency: he mixes up the figures from two different authorities, Varāhamihira (AD 550) and Lakṣmīpati (AD 1758-1831) to arrive at the desired longitude of 47.2 minutes East of Avanti. Varāhamihira's longitude for Vārāṇasi, as computed from Alexandria, is 9 *ghatikā*, and for Avanti/Ujjainī, 7 *ghattikā* and 20 *pala* (9.00-7.20 = 1.40 = 100 pala.). To these figures, Pant amputes Lakṣmīpati's longitude for the Nepal Valley (19 *pala* for the Nepal Valley) to arrive at 2 *ghatikā* or 120 *pala*. All

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40 Malla, 1984b, pp. 63-69.
41 Lévi, 1900/1987, pp. 60-61.

this quibbling with figures to suit one's theory was totally unexpected of 'a renowned mathematician', considered by some of his admirers as 'the Socrates of Nepal'. Not dissimilar is his misleading calculation of the colophon of Saṃvat 301, where he added 1 to Saṃvat 301 and made it Saṃvat 302 by a stroke of the pen for *Vaiśakha Saptamī* in a *Kārttikādi* year.[42]

Sumati Was Not a Nepali

Nayarāj Pant claimed that Acārya Sumati composed his *tantra* in Nepal. In the wake of the nationalistic fervor of the 1960s, similar 'nationalist' claims were also made by Pandit Buddhisāgar Parājulī in his introduction to *Bṛhatsūcīpatram*, Vol. I (1960: gha).[43] He wrote that both Gavastidipa and Tāmradvīpa were in Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa because the *cara-prāṇa* (addition or subtraction of ascensional differences between the meridian and a given latitude) for *Meṣādi* 6 rāśīs in the *Sumatitantra* are identical to those given by astrologers in Nepal. He also claimed that the *Saušruti-saṃhitā-Sahottaratantra* of *Saṃvat 301* was copied during the reign of Mānadeva I.[44] Similarly, a year later, Lamsāl, an ācārya in Indian astronomy, wrote that the Sumatitantra is the pride of Nepal and that it was written at the time of Mānadeva I and that the *Meṣādi cara-prāṇa*, i.e., ascensional differences or corrections for *Meṣādi 6 rāśīs* given in the text are identical to those used by Nepalese astrologers.[45] However, Lamsāl carefully compared the astronomical constants given in the *Sumatitantra* with those given in Varāhamihira and other authorities, including the modern ones, mainly based on Sengupta's Introduction to Burgess' translation of the *Sūrya Sihhhānta* (1935/1997: VI-LI). He noted that the corrupt copy we have in the National Archives cannot be the original one as it is so full of linguistic lapses. He also says that its astronomical parameters are based on ancient *Sūrya Siddhānta*, and that the text is of uncertain age as Sumati has ignored the precession of equinoxes. Notwithstanding his wild claim that the original text was written in Nepal after the founding of Mānadeva I's epoch era, Lamsāl's paper is a simple concise introduction available in Nepali to the

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42 Pant et al, 1987, pp. 19, 125-135.
43 Parājulī, 1960, p. gha.
44 Parājulī, 1966, pp. 19-21.
45 Lamsāl, 1967.

theoretical base of Sumati. In less than five pages he succeeds in conveying his views on the text for which Nayarāj Pant took 60-odd pages! If that was the intellectual situation in the 1960s in Nepal, what could one expect of the copyists of the *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalīs* in the 19th century or of the *Sumititantra*-scribe in 14th-Century Nepālamaṇḍala?

We have given these details also because modern-minded specialists in Indian astronomy are equally misled by false clues based on hearsay. For example, Kripā śaṅkar śuklā, in his edition of the *Sūrya Siddhānta* with Parameśvara's commentary, contends that

> The old *Sūrya Siddhānta* continued to be studied in certain parts of India in some form or other till the end of the tenth century. About 800 AD an astronomer named Sumati of Nepal wrote two works on astronomy one entitled *Sumati-tantra* and the other entitled *Sumati-karaṇa*. In one of the opening verses of the first-mentioned work, Sumati writes: 'This work, called *Sumatitantra*, has been extracted from the *Sūrya Siddhānta* like clarified butter from milk.' It shows that Sumati based his Tantra on the *Sūrya Siddhanta*. The astronomical constants used by Sumati agree with those ascribed by Varāhamihira to the *Sūrya Siddhānta*. It, therefore, seems that Sumati based his work on the same *Sūrya Siddhānta* as was available to Varāhamihira. The other work, as the name implies, is a calendarical work. The works of Sumati show that in the end of eighth century AD the old *Surya Siddhanta* was considered by the astronomers of Nepal to be an important work on astronomy and its elements were used by them in the construction of the Hindu calendar. Sumati received wide publicity and his works traveled to the south as far as Travancore. Shankaranarayana, who belonged to Quilon in Travancore, in his commentary on *Laghubhāṣkarīya* of Bhāṣkara I mentions the name of Sumati and quotes a verse from his work. This commentary of Shankarnarayana, it may be mentioned, was written only 69 years after the composition of the *Sumatitantra*.[46]

Yet another specialist in Indian sciences, H.J.J. Winter of Exeter University in the UK has contributed a chapter to A.L. Basham's *A Cultural History of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975). The following paragraph by him is obviously based on K.S. Shukla (1957),

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46 K.S. Shuklā, 1957, pp. 27-28.

According to Sumati (AD 800) whose work was known both in Nepal and in Kerala, and who wrote his *Sumatitantra* and *Sumati-karana* on the basis of an earlier version of the *Sūrya siddhānta*, it provided the essential elements used by Nepali astronomers in their construction of the Hindu calendar. Evolving during the period between AD 628 and 966, the later version gained greatly in popularity, especially in the twelfth century when Bhāṣkara II quoted from it and Mallikārjuna Sūrīi wrote commentaries on it, first in Telegu then in Sanskrit.[47]

While this quotation ably summarises śuklā, neither of them seems to have really gone critically over the texts by Sumati. The date given by both for Sumati, i.e., AD 800, is based on the misreading of the colophon of the British Museum copy. Bendall not only misread *vasu randhra kṛta* as *vasu candra kṛta*, i.e., 418 for 498, so that śaka 418+78 -AD 496+Mānadeva Saṃvat 304—AD 800. He had also misinterpreted the title of the text as *Sumata Mahātantra*.[48]

Lāṭadeva's *Sūrya Siddhānta*

The *Sūrya Siddhānta* that forms the theoretical basis of Sumati is the *ārdharātrika pakṣa* of Aryabhaṭa I as it was modified by his immediate pupil Lāṭadeva in the light of Aryabhaṭa's *ārdharātrika* system. In his *Indika*, Al-Beruni (AD 1030) says that Lāṭadeva was the author of the *Sūrya Siddhānta*.[49]

Sengupta, too, believes that, 'the old Sūrya Siddhānta was made up-to-date by replacing the old constants in it by new ones from Aryabhaṭa's midnight system.... The date of original Sūrya Siddhanta becomes 384 AD. It came from the *asura* or Babylonian sources.'[50] Nearly all of its astronomical constants are shared by Brahmagupta's *Khaṇḍakhādya, I, 1, 8-13; II, 1-5*, and Bhāṣkara I's *Mahābhāṣkarīya*.[51] The epoch of this *ārdharātrika* version of *Sūrya Siddhānta* is midnight of 20/21 March 505. However, in Chapter IX of Varāhamihira's *Paúcasiddhāntikā*, there is evidence of an earlier *Sūrya Siddhānta* using the noon epoch, and slightly different parameters for the mean motion of the Sun, the Moon, lunar

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47 Winter, 1975, p. 153.
48 Bendall, 1902, pp. 193-194.
49 Al-Biruni, 1910, Vol. I, p. 153.
50 Sengupta, 1935, p. xl.
51 See Kuppana Shastri's edition, Madras, 1957.

apogee and ascending node. Neugebaur and Pingree think that it is the work of Lāṭadeva—the *sarvasiddhānta guru*, i.e., the teacher of all scientific astronomy.[52]

Sumatitantra: A Contaminated Text

The *Sumatitantra,* in the form we have it today, cannot be the original text. Otherwise, how can 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' 304, or AD 880, be mentioned in a text that is nearly three hundred years old in origin? Its language betrays the fact that it has already passed through the hands of generations of not-too-learned scribes and copyists. It is not an unusual process for anonymous Sanskrit texts to become an inclusive or 'composite text' with contaminated deposits at different layers. The best example is the present *Sūrya Siddhānta* which 'became a composite growth from about 400 AD to 725 AD from the evidence of its star tables'.[53] It has been subject to correction, emendation and modification from time to time, and the present *Sūrya Siddhānta* is the latest redaction of the work which assumed the present final shape and size between AD 628 and 966. In fact, the earliest date given for the text is AD 285. The dates of its three substantive revisions, as it were, are AD 285, 500 and 570.[54]

Petech, however, claims that the *Sumatitantra* , in its main portion, (was) 'compiled not after 850 AD'.[55] He does not explain what he meant by 'the main portion' from among its five chapters and a sixth incomplete one. We do not know how he had come to that conclusion.

Can *Sumatitantra* Be Dated?

Is it, then, possible to date the *Sumatitantra* on *any* scientific basis?

The late Pandit Nayarāj Pant believed that it can be dated on the basis of whether or not it gives a rate for the precession of equinoxes *(ayanāṃśa)*. The Earth is not a perfect sphere, nor is its axis a perndicular one. A continuous receding of the sidereal Zodiac, at the rate of 1 degree in 72 years, is caused by the gravitational pull of the Sun and the Moon on the central bulge of the Earth with a declined axis. It means that if the

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52 O. Neugebaur and D. Pingree, 1970, p. 13.
53 Sengupta, 1935, p. xxix.
54 Saha and Lahiri, 1992/1995.
55 Petech, 1984, p. 12, footnote 3.

Vernal Equinox in 1997 is on March 21st, 72 years later it will be on March 20th. Pant claims, 'how much precession is given in a text, or whether it is mentioned or not, enables us to determine the age of the text'.[56] Or, 'There is no mention of the precession of equinoxes in the *Sumatitantra*. Therefore, it was composed in the Licchavi age before the knowledge of the precession of equinoxes became common among the astronomers.'[57]

Some ancient astronomers in India, including Varāhamihira, believed that the sidereal Zodiac was moveable and that its movement was oscillatory and that such a movement was also ominous and inauspicious.

However, no ancient Indian astronomer before Muújāla (AD 932), makes an explicit mention of the rate, nor of the concept of precession as such. Though the original work containing his views on the topic is lost, there is a reference to it in Bhāṣkara II's *Vāsanābhāṣya*—a self-commentary on *Siddhānta-śiromaṇi* (AD 1150). In that text, he writes that precession is what was known as *krāntipāta* (i.e., the intersection of the ecliptic and the equinoctial circles) in earlier works. He says that the earlier ācāryas did not mention it because it was too negligible during their time.[58] Similarly,

> From a stanza of Viṣṇucandra (AD 578), quoted by Pṛthudakasvāmī (AD 864) in his commentary on the *Brahmasputasiddhānta*, it appears that this subject was dealt with in the old *Sūrya Siddhanta* (p. 38). According to the (new) *Sūrya Siddhānta*, the precessional motion is likened to liberation or oscillation of the equinoxes about a fixed point. According to this theory, the equinoxes, like the pendulum, at first move eastward, reach the maximum amplitude and then move westward. The maximum eastward deviation is 27 degrees whence the annual rate works out to 54 seconds as against the modern value of 50.25 seconds.[59]

David Pingree, one of the foremost Western authorities on Indian Mathematical Astronomy, published a terse treatment on the topic of *ayanāṃśa* with the title 'Precession and Trepidation in Indian Astronomy

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56 Pant et al, 1978b, p. 137.
57 Pant et al, 1983, p. 19.
58 Commentary on verses 17, 18 and 19 of SS in the *Golabandhādhikāra*.
59 Jaggi, 1990, pp. 75-76.

before 1200 AD', in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* (Vol. 3, 1972, pp. 27-35). He shows that there were three different accounts of it in the astronomical works before AD 1200: 1) trepidation with 27″ x 2 = 54″, 2) trepidation with an amplitude of 59.9″ seconds, and 3) the third account gives simple precession.

The Year of Zero Degree Precession and Its Annual Rate

There is no unanimity of scholarly opinions on the exact date of zero degree precession, nor on its annual rate. The initial year of zero degree precession is considered to be AD 285 by the Calendar Reform Committee of India (1955). Cyril Pagan, a Western advocate of the Sidereal Zodiac as against Western Tropical Zodiac, believed that the Zero degree precession coincided with AD 213. K.S. Krishnamurti, an Indian specialist in Oriental Astronomy, thought that in the year AD 291, the precession of the equinoxes was Zero. The current *Sūrya Siddhanta* gives AD 499 as the year of zero degree trepidation; Muújāla in his *Laghumānasa* gives AD 527 as the year for zero degree precession, Bhoja (AD 1042) gave AD 522, Dāmodara, AD 420, and Pillai, AD 533.

Not only that there is such a diversity of opinions on the initial year, there is also no uniformity of opinions on the rate of precession. Muújāla thought that it was 59.9″ or nearly 1 minute of the arc whereas the modern *Sūrya Siddhānta* gives an oscillation rate of 54″, i.e., 27″ eastwards and then 27″ westward. Modern astronomers since Newton give 50.25″ as the annual rate of precession.

We cannot, therefore, date an astronomical text simply on the basis of the presence or absence of a reference to the precession of equinoxes.

The Incidence of the Word *ayanāṃśa* in *Sumatitantra*

Pandit Nayarāj Pant believed that the *Sumatitantra* was written sometime during the three centuries between AD 576 and 879, between the so-called 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' and Nepāla Saṃvat because Sumati does not mention the precession or its rate explicitly anywhere in the text. The first mention of *ayana-calana* (the shifting of equinoxes) occurs in *Vaṭeśvara Siddhānta* (AD 904) but he says that the astronomer who knows his spherical trigonometry should calculate his own precession rate.[60] Thus, in the British Museum copy, on several folios of the *Sumatitantra*,

60 Shukla, 1957, p. 25.

there is a mention of the word, *ayanāṃśa*. In the Chapter on the True Motions of the Planets, there occur the following lines

> Deśāntaranādi yojana 160 bunajya yojana 9600 bhāga 28812 vikṣepakrānti ayanānsaúca tena kārayet
>
> (folio 24b)

In the Chapter on Lunar Eclipses, we have the following lines

> akṣajyākarme guṇa 1561 bhāga 3438//**ayanāṃśú**cakarme guṇa 1398 bhāga 3438//
>
> (folio 85b)

In the Chapter on Solar eclipse, we have the following lines:

> Sparsa madhyānta pūrveṇa ayanāṃśaúca sādhayet/
> Akṣasūtrāntathaivaúca parilekhāni kārayet//
>
> *(folio 107b)*
>
> grāsādi madhyānta divākareṣu/ krameṇa rāśītryasaṃyuteṣu
> *ṣadabhūttareṣaṭkhapareca yāmyāṃ krāntijyamānīya yathaiva pūrvvaṃ*
> *bhānoyanāṃśaṃmiti lakṣayitvā/ sasparśa madhya grahaṇānta kāle//*
> *pratyāya nāḍīmasu piṇḍa kuryāt sumnyakhatīrthena vibhakta labdham*
>
> (folio114b)
>
> *grāsādi madhyanta kramāyanamśā//akṣayanāmsau samadik yutamtau yojitam*
>
> (folio 124b)

The longitude of a planet for any given moment can be calculated by using a standard *paṇcāṅga*. *Nirayana* (sidereal) longitude plus *ayanāṃśa* gives the *sāyana* (tropical) longitude of the planet. However, the moot question here is: how come the word is undeniably there in the text of *Sumatitantra* if there were no related concept embedded in it? Can we have the word without the related concept in any discourse? No, certainly, not; unless the word is, like the words in nonsense verse or *Alice in Wonderland*—semantically vacuous.

Do We Have the Whole of *Sumatitantra* Text?

Both the copies of the *Sumatitantra* end abruptly; the last 13/14 lines in the British Museum copy are missing from the copy in the National Archives, and in their stead there is a stray folio with only seven lines,

and it is numbered 162a (?) which follows folio 143b. This indicates the plain fact that there are at least 20 folios misplaced in the National Archives. However, it has some tables (folios162a-166b), giving the *śigraha* (epicycle) figures for each degree of the Planets—Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. On folio 165b we have a table for *Krāntikhaṇḍa* (Sine for Declination), *Lagna* (Rising Point of the Ecliptic) and *Triśavādi* (Three Transformations) for each of the 90 degrees of the quadrant. There are also three additional folios without page numbers, which give the summary of mean motions, etc, as enunciated in the main text. Then comes the colophon. It dates the text, copied for the second time, on *Nepāla Saṃvat 495 Pauṣa śukla 13.* All the above Tables are missing in the British Museum copy. In that copy, the last 18 lines end abruptly with

Evante kathiyinatra saptapātalakāni ca/yakramova...

after which comes all of a sudden the colophon. The copyist seemed to have thought that the following descriptive section on the *saptapātāla* (seven circles of the Hell) is not of day-to-day relevance. The first colophon has the following date: *//svādādricatvāḥ saha vatsareva māsā bhavā pauṣa sita navaṃmyāṃ*, i.e., NS *476 Pauṣa śukla 9...*

In the National Archives copy, the supplementary folios 11a,- b, 12a,- b, 13a- and b appear to represent what are folios 121a,-b, 122a-b, 123a,- b, 124a and b in the British Museum copy. In both copies these folios have little direct connection with the main running text, but they try to show the śaka Saṃvat calculations in the context of the Nepāla Saṃvat. As such, these portions appear to be unsuccessful attempts at textual modification, amputation or interpolation.

Although all the topics enumerated at the beginning of the text in the Chapter I on the Mean Motions of the Planets are covered by the copies we have, we do not really know whether the copies we have contain the whole of the *Sumatitantra.* Above all, there is no star-table or a Chapter on *Nakṣatras* (asterisms) which would have made the dating of the text a less serious problem. However, the *Sumatitantra* (folio 20a-b) gives the *maṇḍocāṃśa*, i.e., planetary longitudes for the higher apses in degrees, pertaining to the Equation of the Centre. These astronomical parameters are identical with those of *Mahābhāskarīya*, VII: 25-28a and *Khaṇḍakhādyaka*. The *pātāṃśa* or (longitude of ascending nodes of the Planets in degrees since the beginning of the Kali) given in the *Sumatitantra*

(Folio 48a) are identical with those given in *Mahābhāṣkarīya* (VII. 9-10). Similarly, *Vikṣepa* (the Celestial Latitude of the Planets) is given in folio 48a. All these astronomical constants are of about AD 505.

The following verse cited by śaṅkaranārāyaṇa (AD 825-900) in his *Vivaraṇa* on *Laghubhāṣkarīya* (IV: 15-16) from Acārya Sumati, does not occur in the chapters on eclipses or elsewhere in the text,

Prācyāṃ na ravergrahaṇaṃ vāruṇyāṃ cāpi śītakiraṇasya/
prācyāṃ vṛṇoti candraṃ vṛṇoti sūryaḥ tathāparataḥ//

Of the usual 500 verses in 14 chapters of the *Sūrya Siddhānta*, the *Sumatitantra* contains only six. We cannot, therefore, date the text simply on the basis of a single criterion, i.e., the presence or absence of any explicit reference to the annual rate of precession. The original text of the old *Sūrya Siddhānta*, as summarised by Varāhamihira (and modified by Lāṭadeva) in Chapters I, IX, X, XI, XVI and XVII of the *Paúcasiddhāntikā*, is no longer available. What we have in that book is only a modified version of the original theory. It is a great pity that the eminent team of editors/transcribers of the printed *Sumatitantram* (1978) did not have access to the British Museum copy, and they did all the so-called 'emendations' without consulting the earlier copy.[61] This is in total defiance of elementary principles of textual criticism.

The Intercalated Months in the Inscriptions: Can These Be a Criterion for Identifying the Epoch Era Used in the Licchavi Inscriptions?

The late Pandit Nayarāj Pant's book, *Licchavisaṃvatko Nirṇaya* (1987) was awarded the Madan Puraskār for Vikram Saṃvat 2043, and several national medals and prizes decorated him thereafter. Madan Mani Dixit, a distinguished Nepali writer on his own right, and also the then Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy, may not have had sufficient time to read the book, nor to grasp its methodological premises and framework. However, he wrote that the book was 'a masterpiece of scientific reasoning—a work of great importance' (all harmless, but potentially vacuous, adjectives such as *Mahān*, *Viśāl* and *Vaijúānika* were merely piled up on the author and/or his books by most of the writers contributing to the volume or volumes without anyone critically

61 Pant et al, 1978, Preface, p. 28.

assessing the theoretical or methodological bases). 'It is such an important book that had not yet been written by any Nepali, then or now. Therefore, Nayrāj Pant is the tallest Nepali,' wrote Dixit in his Foreword.

In AD 2000, the late Pandit Nayarāj Pant was also honoured with an Honorary Doctor of Letters (*mahāvidyāvāridhī*, i.e., 'a-vast-ocean-of-knowledge' degree by Tribhuvan University. The 'experts' who evaluated his work, such as Madan Mani Dixit, must have known the field better than we do. The fact, however, remains that Nayarāj Pant based his 'conclusions' in the book on the following three shaky and disputable bases,

1. The chronology given in the *Sumatitantra,* with reference to the epoch era used by Mānadeva and his successors, on the one hand, and Aṃśuvarmā and his successors, on the other hand;
2. The Intercalated Month/Expunged Month Tables prepared by Chatre (1860) or by Sewell (1924); and
3. A corrupt and undated Nepalese manuscript on assorted topics, but of no great age.

With the help of these three tools Pant and his team set out to refute the views of ten other historians from France, India and Nepal, in pp. 183-540 of their *magnum opus*, only to conclude by 'mathematically proving' that there was a 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' founded in AD 576. Since the second set of inscriptions are dated in the so-called 'Mānadeva Saṃvat', thus runs their argument, 'the earlier inscriptions must have been dated in śaka Saṃvat because all historical events tally well'. Neither of these conclusions is an example of 'scientific reasoning'.

More than a century ago, in the Gujarāti version of his work Bhagwānlāl Indrājī (1880) had interpreted the epoch era used by Mānadeva and his successors as the śaka era, and the era used by Aṃśuvarmā and his successors as the Harṣa Era founded in AD 606. At the behest of his English translater, Georg Buhler, he changed his view and re-interpreted it as Vikrama Era in the English version of his work.[62] 23 years later, Lévi evaluated the available evidence before him and conjectured the possibilities of the śaka era being used in Licchavi

62 See Buhler's preface to Bhagwanlal Indraji, 1885.

inscriptions.[63] In 1945, R.C. Majumdar considered the epoch era in early Licchavi inscriptions to be śaka and the era used by Aṃśvarmā to be śaka with 500 left out.[64] Echoing Majumdar's views, nearly 40 years ago, D.C. Sircar wrote:

> The inscriptions of Mānadeva and his successors, including the earlier records of Aṃśuvarman are dated in the śaka Era (Sircar, 1958: 886, Note 1). But the later epigraphs of Aṃśvarman and his successors, probably bear dates in the śaka Era minus 500, i.e., śaka 501 – Year I of Aṃśuvarman's reginal reckoning.[65]

Although he merely gave a new name to śaka Era, Bāburām Acārya already concluded in 1971 that the the epoch era used by Aṃśuvarmā is none other than the earlier era in use with the numeral for century dropped. In his brief paper published in the *Gorkhapatra* for September 2, 1972, 'Aṃśuvarmāko Saṃvatmā eka Vicār', historian Bhuwanlāl Pradhān, argued for the possibility of Aṃśuvarmā using śaka Saṃvat 527, 528, 529 as 27, 28, 29. 'There is every possibility that he computed the day 1 of Saṃvat 529 as the day 1 of his Saṃvat 29,' wrote Pradhān in his little noticed paper.[66]

We have, of course, no infallible criterion to test these views of eminent historians or any other views, for that matter, because, as we have discussed earlier, out of more than 200 Licchavi inscriptions, only two are with weekdays. Even for these two scanty pieces of available evidence, historians have given different AD equivalents. The time difference between the two documents is 270 years. Without any exception, all the newly found inscriptions do not have weekday in their dates. There are, however, 11 inscriptions with interacalated months. Pandit Nayarāj Pant and his now defunct school believe that these intercalated data can be used to verify the epoch era in use in Licchavi inscriptions. The following are the epigraphic data:

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63 Lévi, 1908.
64 Majumdar (revised in 1959 and published in 1961, pp. 47-49, under the title 'The Eras of Nepal'.
65 Sircar, 1965, p. 271.
66 Pradhān, 1972, p. 7.

(Saṃvat 3)98? prathama-āṣāḍhe-śukladivā 12, from Budhānilakaṇṭha, Viṣṇupādukā phedi. (Shankar Mān Rājvaṃśī read the last figure as 5, Dhanavajra and his colleagues as 6; during the six years of his 15-year tenure as a member of the Royal Nepal Academy, Pant finally decided that the last figure is neither 5 nor 6 , but 8 !)
Saṃvat 435 Dvitīyā-Pauṣe śukladivā 5, from Patan, Bahālakhu
Saṃvat 449 prathamāṣa (ḍha) śukladaśamyām, from Kisipidi
Saṃvat 479 Dvitīyā āṣāḍha, from Brahma Tole, Kathmandu
Saṃvat 487 prathamāṣḍhaśukladwitīyāyām, from Devapāṭan
Saṃvat 517 prathamāṣāḍhaśukladivādvādaśyām from Dharmasthali
Saṃvat 519 prathamapauṣaśukladivādvādaśyām, from Satuṅgal
Saṃvat 31 *dvitīyapouṣaśuklāṣṭamyām,* Bhaktapur, Ināyaco
Saṃvat 34 *prathamapauṣaśukladvitīyāyām,* Pāṭan, Sundhāra
Saṃvat 536 dvitīyapauṣaśuklapaúcamyām from Gokarṇa Bāluvā,
Paúcāśatāsamadhikesamvatsaraśatadvaye prathamāṣāḍhamāsasya dvitīyādivase, i.e., Saṃvat 250 prathamāṣāḍha 2, from Motitār, Pāṭan

Evidently, in Licchavi Nepal, an ancient system of intercalation was observed in its luni-solar calendar based on mean reckoning. The differences between mean reckoning and true reckoning may vary from a minimum of 7 hours 18 minutes to the maximum of 14 hours 12 minutes in the ending moment of a *tithi*—the most important factor in Indian chronology. It is a system unattested in civil calendar anywhere else in the Indian sub-continent, then or now. According to this system, when a saṅkrānt is missing in any synodic month within an *ayana*, the last month of the *ayana* was intercalated, i.e., the first month was called *prathama-* and the following intercalated one, *dvitīyā-*. The intercalated month is either āṣāḍha in the middle of a five-year cycle or Pauṣa at the end of it. This general rule is, however, violated by a number of Licchavi inscriptions such as the inscriptions dated Saṃvat 517 and Saṃvat 519 where we have two intercalations within a gap of 16 months, or by Pauṣa intercalation both in Saṃvat 31 and Saṃvat 34 at a gap of 36 months and in Saṃvat 536 at a gap of 24 months. Normally, an intercalated month coincided with the 31st lunar month in a cycle of 62 synodic months. So, the irregularity of intercalation at a gap of 36 synodic months seems to have been adjusted by an intercalation at a gap of the 24th month in the Saṃvat 536 inscription. Thibaut surmised that, 'the mistake was corrected at irregular times when too great

deviations between the real beginning of the season and the traditional chronological calculation made this necessary.'[67] Though the ancient Nepali civil calendar begins from the Kārttika śukla Pratipad, the initial five-year cycle was computed from Māgha śukla Pratipad of AD 76. In the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (VIII: 27) Varāhamihira, says,

> When Jupiter rises in the month of Māgha, having arrived at the first portion of Dhaniṣṭhā, then commences the first year of the 60-year cycle, by name Prabhava, auspicious to living beings.

'Clearly, the cycle is held to have begun in AD 76 with Jupiter at the beginning of *nakṣatra Dhaniṣṭhā* in the month of Māgha. According to a statement in the *Paitāmaha Siddhanta* (Chapter XII, Stanza 2 of *the Paúcasiddhāntikā*), a five -yearly yuga began in AD 81 (expired śaka 2 = AD 81) which is exactly 5 years after AD 76.'[68]

Pandit Nayarāj Pant believed that the intercalated data from Licchavi inscriptions can be used for the verification of the Licchavi epoch era. On Wednesday, September 16, 1981, he issued a two-page handout published by the Royal Nepal Academy, consisting of a table on 'the Epoch Era Used by Aṃśuvarmā and His Successors', where he used the chronology of the *Sumatitantra* to verify the two inscriptions with intercalated months (our No. 8 and No. 9) and two documents with weekdays, dated Saṃvat 31 and Saṃvat 301. This table is reproduced on pages 29-30 of Pant et al, 1987. He showed in a tabular form how only his view was correct and those of seven other historians were wrong. Their book (should anyone call it a book because there is a cover on it?), *Licchavisaṃvatko Nirṇaya* (1987), written in collaboration with Devī Prasād Bhaṇḍarī and Keshav Chandra Neupāne, is just an enlarged verbal *tour de force* based on that classic handout. However, as we have seen above, there are only two possibilities or variables in intercalary months: it is either Pauṣa or āṣāḍha for as many as twelve months of any year.

One cannot verify these data with the help of Sewell's Tables (1896) because they are based on Arya Siddhānta, Caitrādi, the current śaka year using mean reckoning. On the other hand, the tables prepared by

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67 Thibaut, 1899, p. 23.
68 Deb,1931, pp. 271-283.

Kero Lakṣmaṇa Chatre, *Grahasādhankoṣṭhakam*, first published in a Marathi monthly, *Júānaprasāraka*, Vol I, No 12 (1850), reproduced happily since by many scholars such as Nayarāj Pant, without checking, are not of much use either. Chatre's tables are based on the new *Sūrya Siddhānta* using true reckoning based on Caitrādi expired śaka. They cannot be of much relevance in the study and interpretation of Licchavi inscriptions because we have no record of the expunged month before Nepāla Saṃvat 577. Besides, for śaka 532, Chatre's tables give the month of Kārttika as both *adhika māsa* and *kṣaya māsa*. This is just impossible because the same month cannot be both *kṣaya* and *adhika māsa*. There are more than a dozen such instances of expunged Kārttika and Mārga months in Chatre's tables. According to true reckoning, Pauṣa can never be an intercalated month. It can only be an expunged one.

On the above three debatable bases, Nayarāj Pant et al conclude that the epoch era used by Mānadeva and his successors was śaka era and the epoch era used by Aṃśuvarmā and his successors was 'Mānadeva Saṃvat', which they claim was founded in śaka 498/AD 576. With the help of such a methodological framework, Nayarāj Pant tried to refute the views of all other historians, covering about 400 pages of his book. As Petech had once put it rather bluntly,

> The Bhāradvāja system utilised two months only for intercalation. (It) was used in medieval Nepal, and it prevailed also at this early period. This system is a lineal descendant of the Jyotiṣa Vedāṅga. (In this system), whenever one of the first six lunar months contains no saṅkrānti, whichever that month may be, it is always āṣāḍha which is duplicated as an intercalary month; when one of the last six lunar months contain no saṅkrānti, whichever that month may be, it is always Pauṣa which is duplicated as an intercalary month.à The fact that Bharadvāja system is followed in these inscriptions precludes all possibilities of utilising the intercalation for determining the starting point of the era, as it has been attempted again and again since the time of Lévi. Beyond this point we cannot go. By no Siddhānta, by no system, with no era, can we get intercalations at the intervals (attested in Licchavi inscriptions).[69]

Adhimāsa Sūtra: Which Version Is Authentic?

Intercalation is an occasional adjustment in the luni-solar calendar so that divergence between a purely solar calendar and a purely lunar

[69] Petech, 1961, pp. 229-230.

calendar is minimised. At least, during the early Malla period, the astrologers seemed to have vacillated between the two systems of time reckoning. A tangible evidence of it is the so-called *adhimāsasūtras* as found in the *Dharmanirṇayatithisārasaṅgraha* (Cat.I 1634. 11, folio 21b-22a NGMPP No. B 33/20).

There is no acceptable and satisfactory translation of the corrupt text of the oft-quoted *Adhikamāsaprakaraṇa* of the *Dharmanirṇayatithisārasaṃgraha* (DNTSS), first published by Petech in 1958. Its origin or textual source is unknown and obscure as Bharadvāja and Nārada are not too well-known astronomers with a *siddhānta* of their own. Both are, however, mentioned by Varāhamihira in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.[70] Dealing with several topics, the text, of which the verses form a very small part, is undated. Although it is a palmleaf manuscript, paleographically, it is not older than the late sixteenth century. At least, it is not written in the Bhujiṃmola script. Consisting of seven and a half verses, the chapter enunciates the views of Nārada based on Caitrādi lunar months, the first half starting from spring equinox and latter half starting from autumn equinox. Bhāradvāja's views are based on the Māghādi solar year, the first half starting from winter solstice, the second half starting from summer solstice. However, the translation and interpretation of the last verse, in particular, is problematic and controversial. This will be evident from a comparison of Petech's and Shankar Mān Rājvaṃśī's translation of the verse:

Adhimāsa yadāanasṭā ra (a) yaṇe dve sucintayet/
Dvirāṣāḍho dvipauṣaśca bhāradvājasya vacanaṃ yathā//

which Petech translates as

> The intercalary months, if they (wise men) consider well, the two half years of the non-existent (*saṃkrānti*, are) a second āṣāḍha and a second Pauṣa, according to the precepts of Bhāradvāja.[71]

It is difficult to guess what Petech may have meant by the above enigmatic sentence. Rājvaṃśī, on the other hand, translates the verse as the

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70 Kern, 1916, pp. 95-96, 103.
71 Petech, 1984, pp. 14-15.

following—a translation clearly influenced by the modern practice based on true reckoning:

> When there is an expunged month in an *ayana* then in both the *ayanas* both āṣāḍha and Pauṣa are intercalated.[72]

In the *Sumati Siddhānta,* (Kaiser Library No 82, palmleaf, 69 folios in Bhujiṃmola script, with entries from NS 456-573/AD 1336-1453), unfortunately so poorly transcribed by Pant et al (1978), there are at least three different versions of *the adhikamāsasūtra*. On folio 13 / 34, we have a two-stanza text. It begins with a Newari sentence: *lā taṃṇeyā thathyam juroṃ,* i.e., this is how months are intercalated: the first half of the year begins with makara-rāśī (solar Māgha) and ends with mithuna-rāśī (solar āṣāḍha). If the transition of the Sun is missing in any one of these lunar months within uttarāyaṇa, then the month of Pauṣa is intercalated. The second half of the year begins with karkaṭa rāśī (solar śrāvaṇa) and ends with dhanuṣa rāśī (solar Pauṣa). If the transition of the Sun is missing in any of these lunar months in dakṣināyṇa, then the month of āśāḍha is intercalated. This part of the text ends with a Newari statement *iti lā tamṁeyā prapāti thathyem jurom//0//*. It may roughly be translated as the following:

> This is the tradition of intercalating months.

However, on folio 3a there are still other versions of the sūtra. It begins with, *adhikamāsaka sūtraṃ iti*. And then goes on to enunciate the views of Nārada. He stipulates that if the transition of the Sun is missing between the synodic months of Caitra and Bhādra, then the month of āṣāḍha is intercalated. If the transition of the Sun is missing in any month between the synodic month of āśvina and phālguṇa, then the month of Pauṣa is intercalated. Then a disturbing statement in Newari comes:

> *lā taṃneyā thva pāṭha pramāṇana taṅa tu jiva juroṃ*
> *nhātho pāṭhana majiva//0//*
> *Caitrādi tyādi thva pāṭhana mālva lā taṃneḥ thathyeṃ jiva juroṃ.*

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72 Rājavaṃśī, 1973, p. 11.

A tentative translation of this stilted mediaeval Newari statement into English would perhaps be the following: 'This textual proof for intercalation of months is correct; the earlier one is not. The correct version is the one that begins with Caitrādi etc.' We must not forget that the Nepali civil calendar begins from Kārttika śukla pratipad. So far, so good. Then on folio 3a the text has yet another version. It begins with Meṣa rāśī (solar Vaiśākha), ending the first half of the year with kanyā rāśī (solar āśvina). If there is no transition of the Sun in any of the above lunar months, the month of āṣāḍha is intercalated. The latter half of the year begins with Tulā rāśī (solar Kārttika) and ends with the Sun in Mīna rāśī (solar Caitra). If there is no transition of the Sun in any of these lunar months, the month of Pauṣa is intercalated. At the end, again, comes a caveat in Newari which says: 'The intercalation of months has been written down. Months have to be intercalated according to this textual evidence.' Now, we are at once in a state of confusion on which of these different versions was intended as the authoritative textual evidence. The version one of the sūtra has purely solar months with the first half beginning with the Sun's entry in the Makara rāśī and the second half beginning with the Sun's entry into Karkaṭa rāśī. In second version of the sūtra in *the Sumati Siddhānta*, representing Nārada's precepts, the first half of the year begins with the lunar month of Caitra and it ends in Bhādra which leads to an intercalation in āṣāḍha. The second half begins with āśvina and ends in Phālguṇa. If the transition of the Sun is missing in any of these synodic months it will lead to intercalation in the month of Pauṣa.

These versions are, again, different from the one given in a brief table in the *Sumatikaraṇa*, a paper manuscript in the National Archives (I 1173/B 356/16). On folio 23a of that manuscript, we have *a Māghādi* year based on the rāsī system indicated by numerals, enunciating an āṣāḍha intercalation in Uttarāyaṇa and Pauṣa intercalation in Dakṣināyaṇa. All these divergences in textual recensions are reduced by Petech (1984) to two versions only: Nārada's precepts based on a Caitrādi year and Bhāradvāja's precepts based on ayana. He generalises these recensions in *the Sumati Siddhānta*, as 'a parallel text' which merely gives the same version 'in terms of solar months'. This simplification of the textual evidence may be because Petech was unable to consider and interpret the significance of the Newari caveat.

The crucial question is: which of these distinct as well as conflicting

versions of the *adhikamāsasūtra* was followed in Licchavi Nepal?, or did different versions prevail during different periods?—it would just be impossible to decide because only two months, Pauṣa and āṣāḍa, were intercalated. It would be a senseless assumption to believe that in Licchavi Nepal there were no astronomical disputes between rival schools of royal astrologers or village astrologers on when to observe an intercalated month—in Pauṣa or in āṣāḍa. Whenever it is observed, an intercalated month disrupts not only the ritual life, but also the secular timeframe of a society. Both sacred and secular life of the common people are affected by an intercalated month. Therefore, historical notes from the Later Malla period have a number of entries for dates when disputes among astrologers took place. Even today, notwithstanding the learned interceptions of the *Paúcāṅga Nirṇāyaka Samiti*, there are fierce and vocal disputes among the astronomers/astrologers on when to observe the *Mahānavamī*, *Vijayādaśamī*, or *Lakṣmī Pūjā*, or *Govardhana Pūjā*, on whether to follow one system as against others. Newspaper columns are at times full of angry rejoinders from one another, all citing *smṛtis*, *sūtras*, *śāstras* and, of course, *nibandhas*. Most of the current *paúcāṅgas* are based on diverse sources, as diverse as Gaṇeśa Daivajúa (b. 1507), Makaraṇḍa (ca. 1438), Rāmabhaṭṭa's (1600) *Rāmavinoda*, and Ketakar (1878). This may be one of the several reasons why the four different houses of astrologers, representing diverse siddhāntas or branches of astronomy assemble at a resting place near the palace to decide upon the auspicious moment for the Chariot Festival of the Lord of Buṅga!

Confessions as Conclusions

Evidently, there is no connection between a system of intercalation and an epoch era in use just as there is no germane connection between the Vikrama Era and the intercalation system we follow now. The very fact that the same ancient system of intercalation was continued both during the Licchavi Period and the Early Malla Period, even after the founding of Nepāla Saṃvat, shows that there can be no inalienable connection between an epoch era and a system of intercalation. On the basis of intercalation, say, in the month of śrāvaṇa, it is all but impossible to tell which epoch era was used in a document dated Saṃvat 2054 if such a document were to be unearthed a millennium or two later by archaeologists. With such dubious premises and tools as the *adhimāsaprakaraṇa* of the *Dharmanirṇayatitihisārasaṃgraha* (DNTSS), there

is no wonder if Nayarāj Pant's 640 -page book ends with the following disappointing confessional statements:

1. No use has been made of the astronomical calculations from the *Sumatitantra;* only its historical essence has been fully used in this work (p. 566). (Does *Sumatitantra,* then, contain some historical secrecy unrevealed so far?)
2. As the second epoch era has been verified, the first epoch era cannot be any other than śaka. This is almost certain, but it has not been proved mathematically (p. 571).
3. No matter whichever Saṃvat one considers, no matter howsoever one computes one is not able to verify the intercalated months mathematically (p. 572). (By using *adhimāsaprakaraṇa* of the DNTSS?, or *adhimāsasūtras* of the *Sumati Siddhānta*?)
4. In *Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa,* the months of Pauṣa and āṣāḍha alone are intercalated. As such a system of calculation based on śaka era is given by Varāhamihira, one tends to believe that in Mānadeva's time, *Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa* was prevalent (p. 572). (Then, why don't we also say that Vedāṅga jyautiṣa, not any other well-known siddhāntic texts such as Brahmagupta's *Khaṇḍakhādyaka* [AD 665] and śatānanda's *Bhāśvati-Karaṇa* [ca. AD 1099] prevailed in Nepal till NS 576? Till then no month other than āṣāḍha and Pauṣa was intercalated.)
5. One cannot interpret all the (49) verses of *Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa*, nor are there any examples available. There is a wide diversity of opinions among the explicators. We seemed to have found some examples (of the use of the system), but one cannot be too sure to speak authoritatively. (p. 573) (Which of the three versions of *Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa* are we talking about, the ṛg version with 36 verses, or Yajuṣa version with 49 verses of which only 30 are common to the ṛg version, or the Atharvaṇa version with 162 verses, including the 93rd arcā, clearly enumerating all the 7 *Vāras* with their presiding deities? Pant et al [1987] quote 8 verses on the computation of days, *ayana* and intercalation from Yajuṣa version and 9 verses on *tithi* and *karaṇa* from the Atharvaṇa version.)
6. So far I have not myself understood the meaning of (all the 36 or 49 verses of) Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa, let alone teaching it to others. There is no authoritative ancient exegesis on Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa. When will I be able to make out the meaning of Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa with the help of *Siddhānta śiromaṇī*? (p. 575). (See śivarāj Acārya Kaundinnyāyana's

Svadharmasaṃdeśa No 4, pp. 15-19, 2001 for an incisive criticism of Nayarāj Pant's readings).

Coming as they do at the end of the book and its 36-page 'Concluding Chapter' these statements are a surprising revelation, particularly in a book entitled *Licchivisaṃvatko Nirṇaya* authored by the progenitor of the Itihāsa Saṃśodhana movement, with the assistance and collaboration of knowledgeable historians such as Mahes Rāj Pant, Dines Rāj Pant, and, of course, Gyānmaṇi Nepāl, whose last-minute rescue operations gave the semblance of a book to this unseemly compilation of talks, tables, translations and contributions of assorted writers. As a matter of fact, in all sanguinity, the title of the book should have been *Licchavisaṃvatko Annyola* (Confusion in the Views about Licchavi Era). The sum and substance of the 640-page book may be summarised in a few sentences. Nearly a similar conclusion had already been reached by Petech in 1961, a conclusion which he rephrased in just four brilliant lines:

> The dates with intercalary months found in the Licchavi inscriptions hitherto published have only āṣāḍha and Pauṣa. *But they cannot be verified by any known system, the medieval Nepalese not excluded.* The question ought to be the subject of a special study.[73]

Although it was in use for *ritual purposes* for more than a millennium, Lagadha's *Jyautiṣa vedāṅga*, 'containing an *inaccurate scheme* for intercalating two synodic months in every five years, was probably never used to regulate a civil calendar in India, where the beginning of each month was expected to coincide as closely as possible with the sunrise which follows the true conjunction of the Sun and the Moon'.[74]

An intercalary month, or *adhimāsa*, was from time to time added to the normal 12 months of the year, presumably in order to make the beginnings of the sun's *ayana*s fall in the correct months. Even after observing two intercalated months in every five years, there would still be a whole month's discrepancy between the solar calendar and the lunar calendar in every 40 years. 'Despite the efforts of many scholars to

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73 Petech, 1984, p. 20, footnote 1.
74 Pingree, 1982, p. 355; also Pingree, 1973, pp. 1-12.

prove the contrary, *no systematic intercalation scheme can be attributed to this period'*.[75]

The Final Dismal Leap in Logic

The most unnerving 'conclusions' one comes across in the whole book by Pant et al are the following unbelievable high jumps in logic. The quotations are all from Pant et al (1987: 179-180). Unless specified otherwise, all English translations in this paper are by me.

1. The dates in Aṃśuvarmā's and his successors' inscriptions can be verified only with the help of the chronology given in the *Sumatitantra*. (As we have seen, this chronology has no basis in historical facts just as its geographical descriptions are of no use at all.)
2. Aṃśuvarmā was the first one to use weekday in inscriptions. (Except in one inscription, he did not use a weekday, nor did his successors for the next 270 years. The use of the weekday cannot be a watershed for dividing the *Vedāṅga* and Siddhāntic systems of astronomy in India, and there is nothing else in Aṃśuvarmā's inscriptions to do so in Nepal. All the presiding deities of the seven weekdays are enumerated in the *Atharvaṇa Jyautiṣa, arcā* 93rd.)
3. Both Sumati and Aṃśuvarmā were the devotees of śiva. (That does not prove that the Sumati system was followed by Aṃśuvarmā. Although he styled himself as the one who was 'favoured by the grace of the feet of Lord Paśupati', he did not exercise any discrimination among śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, śākta and Baudha religious foundations.)
4. Aṃśuvarmā was the one who started to compute time according to *Sumatitantra* in Nepal. (There is no evidence for the use of the *Sumatitantra* in the Licchavi period. The system of *āṣāḍha/Pauṣa* intercalation is propounded, not only in *Vedāṅga Jyautiṣa;* it is common to *Paitamaha Siddhānta* (where the 5-year cycle began from AD 76 when both the Sun and the Moon were in *Dhaniṣṭhā Nakṣatra* [Alpha Delphini] on *Māgha śukla Pratipad tithi*, in Droṇa's *Smṛtismuccaya*, and Jain *Sūrya Prajúapti.* Astronomer Bhāradvāja, whose views on intercalation at the end of an *ayana* held sway in ancient and early mediaeval Nepal, was still in vogue in early mediaeval Nepal Valley during Nepāla saṃvat ca. 132-570 [AD

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75 Pingree, 1978, pp. 535.

1011-1449]. This tradition was probably abandoned or replaced by other systems based on true reckoning since NS 577 only.)

5. The author of the *Sumatitantra* called his country *Kanyādvīpa* because Varāhamihira considered that among all the nine climes of Bhāratavarṣa, the *Varṇāśrama* system prevailed only in *Kanyādvīpa*. (Both Sumati and Varāhamihira were talking about *Kanyādvīpa*, wherever it be, not about Nepal.)
6. As Aṃśuvarmā considered himself an adherent of *ārya-maryādā* (i.e., the four stages of Hindu life and the caste system, among other things) he was the one who constructed a *paúcāṅga* according to the *Sumatitantra* in Nepal. (There is no inherent connection between a society's adherence to the *varṇa* system and *Sumatitantra*. No social system has to follow one in order to follow the other. There is nothing unique in the inscriptions of Aṃśuvarmā to arrive at such a conclusion because most ambitious rulers in āryāvarta, including Mahārāja Jang Bahādur Rāṇā, made exactly similar claims. The ārya-maryādā was only an ideal to which the ruling elites in Jambūdvīpa wished to approximate their social realities. In Nepal, where even after two millennia of Hinduisation, more than half the population still follow animism and faith-healing, *The Constitution of Nepal, 1991* defines Nepal as a Hindu Kingdom, since it is ruled by the Shaha Monarchy which is an adherent of Aryan culture!)[76]

Pant devotes 420 pages (pp. 180-540) of the book to refute the views of ten other historians who held different views, including one of his own star disciples, regarding the epoch era used in ancient Nepal. The main burden of the work is to prove everyone, other than Nayarāj Pant and his ardent disciples, wrong. To anyone who is familiar with the elementary principles of Indian/Nepalese epigraphy or of Indian astronomy, or ancient Nepali history, this is a most bizarre exercise in pedantry based on the assumption that the 11 intercalated epigraphic data can be used for verifying the epoch year of the era used in early Nepal. Because of the use of mean reckoning and the Bhāradvāja system of intercalation it is all but impossible to do so by using the *adhikamāsaprakaraṇa* of the DNTSS, or the Sewell tables, or Chatre tables, or the *Sumatitantra* chronology. As history, the book by Pant et al contains nothing new, and as astronomy it has ended as a futile exercise leading to inconclusive

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76 See Thapar, 1978.

confessions, happily oblivious of modern researches in Indian astronomy accomplished in India and in the West.

External Evidence: The Chinese and Tibetan Sources

There are, however, some kingpins and key chronological landmarks, mainly culled from external sources which serve as indispensable signposts for determining the chronology of early inscriptions from Nepal. The travelogue of Hsuen Tsang (AD 629-645) refers to Aṃśuvarmā as the late, wise, learned and famous ruler who had also composed a work on *śabdavidyāśāstra*. Based on various accounts of the Chinese missions to India and Nepal during AD 643-657, the references to Nepal contained in the T'ang Annals, both the old and new editions, and the brief reference to Nepal contained in the Dun Huang Chronicle are of invaluable help. The last inscription we have of Aṃśuvarmā is dated *Saṃvat 44 Jyeṣṭha śukla* and the first inscription we have of Udayadeva has *Saṃvat 45 āṣāḍhakṛṣṇadvādaśī*. So Aṃśuvarmā must have passed away between *Jyeṣṭha Kṛṣṇapakṣa of Saṃvat 44* and *āṣāḍha śuklapakṣa* of *Saṃvat 45*. If we calculate these dates with an epoch-year of AD 76 and consider Aṃśuvarmā's years as a *lokakāla*, i.e., Saṃvat 44 = Saṃvat 544, then it works out as AD 620. This does not contradict Husen Tsang's observation about Aṃśuvarmā as 'the late ruler'.

Similarly, the Dun Huang Chronicle records that in AD 641 (the year of the arrival of the Chinese Princess Wen Shing Kon-jo), *Yu-sna-kug-ti* (Viṣṇugupta) was killed *(bkum)*, and *Na-ri-ba-ba* (Narendradeva) was installed the King (*rgyal phor bchug*) with the help of T'u-fan (Tibet) where he was in political asylum after the overthrow of his father, Udayadeva, by his own brother, Dhruvadeva.[77] We have Bhīmārjunadeva-Viṣṇugupta's inscription upto *Samvat 65 Phālguna śukla 2*. The first inscription of Narendradeva is dated *Saṃvat 67 Pauṣa śukla 2*. So, any time between *Phāguṇa śukla 3* to *Saṃvat 65 āśvina 30*, Viṣṇugupta must have been killed in the battle with Narenradeva. In AD 643, when the Chinese mission headed by Li Y-Piao visited Nepal, Narendradeva was already on the throne of Nepal. The date Saṃvat 65 is equivalent to AD 641. (565 + 76 = 641). As the major source of political chronology, the limitations of ancient Nepalese inscriptions are that

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77 See Bacot, Thomas, and Toussaint, 1940, p. 12; also Spanien and Imeda, *Paul Pelliot* No 1288, 1979.

they do not ordinarily mention such important historical landmarks and political upheavals. Here, the Tibetan and Chinese sources are a great relief to fill up the gaps in our knowledge of ancient Nepalese political and cultural history. It was Lévi (1905-8) and Petech (1958/1984) who first published and analysed these materials.

Where Did *Sumatitantra* Come From?

Wherever *Sumatitantra* may have been written, it certainly was not in Nepal by a Nepali astronomer. Notwithstanding the mid-7th-century Chinese compliments for the Nepalese (saying that they were 'clever in the art of the Calendar-maker or they understand fairly well calculation of destiny and researches in physical philosophy'), whenever the *Sumatitrntra* was compiled it certainly was not in 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' 304 = AD 880! The Sumati texts were, in all likelihood, brought to Nepālamaṇḍala, from Simrāungaṛh. So many texts on Indian sciences, particularly astronomy, seem to have arrived from there. (See *Vṛhatsūcīpatram* Vol. 1, which include, among others, Spujidvaja' *Yavanajātaka* in engraved devanāgarī on palmleaf, Varāhamihira's *Yogayātrā* in Gupta script on palmleaf, Somayājī Sūryadeva's Commentary on śrīpati, palmleaf in engraved devanāgarī, Kalyāṇavarmā's *Sārāvalī*, palmleaf in engraved devanāgarī, the commentary on the *Sūrya Siddhānta* by Maithila-vājapeya-somayāji-śrīcandeśvara ācārya in Maithili script, Brahmagupta's *Khaṇḍakhādyam*, palmleaf in engraved Ancient Nāgarī.) They may have been brought from Karṇāṭaka, South India, where Indian astronomy continued to thrive till very late in the day. The practice of naming the solar months as Meṣa Māsa, Vṛṣa Māsa, etc, is prevalent in Kerala, Karṇāṭaka, Mithilā and Bengal. It is from that route that the *Sumatitantra*, *Sumati Siddhanta* and *Sumatikaraṇa*, too, must have entered the Nepal Valley. The arrival of the entourage of learned scholars from Smirāungarh, following the Muslim ravage of the city, may have been a principal factor for the transmission of these texts. As the Dowager Queen-Regent, Devaladevī (1326-1366), the wife of Simarungarha's ruler Harasiṃhadeva, ruled for 40 years almost single-handed in Bhaktapur, her maternal home town. Among the several aspects of the Maithil culture assimilated by the Nepal Valley thereafter, one may very well be the arrival of the Siddhānta Jyautiṣa of diverse schools.

There are a large number of astronomical texts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford donated as a bequest by Candra Shumsher Rāṇā. This

holding is at present being catalogued by Professor David Pingree of Brown University, USA. Part I of this catalogue came out from Oxford in 1983. There are some 320 manuscripts on Astronomy/Astrology (some of these are in palmleaf in Maithili/Bengali script) in the Asha Archives which have already been digitalised and scanned. So far not a single siddhanta text or a tantra text composed by a Nepali astronomer has been discovered. The Nepalese astrologers merely adapted some of the texts brought here to their own needs, at times producing their own *Sāriṇī* or *Karaṇa*, such as the one dated NS 582, in which the integers between Jyotirāj's *karaṇa* and Sumurti (i.e., *Sumati karaṇa)* are spelt out in word numerals as well as in numerals. The more competent of them ventured to write commentaries, such as Balabhadra's on śatānanda's *Bhāsvatī*, Lakṣmīpati's on Maheśvra's *Vṛttaśatakaṃ*, Kulānanda's on Varāhamihira's *Mihiraprakāśa*, and Devidatta Pant's on *Makaranda*.

The Relevance of Aṃśuvarmā's Gokarṇa Inscription

A firm evidence for the *lokakāla* is Aṃśuvarmā's inscription from Bāluwā village in Gokarṇa, dated *Saṃvat 536 dvitīyā pauṣa śukla paúcamī*, found in March 1990 by Shyām Sunder Rājvaṃśī, a promising epigraphist at the Department of Archaeology, His Majesty's Government. Coming as it does after Aṃśuvarmā's inscriptions dated Saṃvat 29, Saṃvat 30, Saṃvat 31, Saṃvat 32 and Saṃvat 34, and before his Taukhel inscription of Saṃvat 37, this inscription as well as śivadeva I's Jyābāhāla inscription dated *Saṃvat 535 śrāvaṇa śukla saptamī* are the most tangible evidence of the fact that there was only one epoch era in use in Licchavi Nepal. The 'so-called Mānadeva era' (by the way, this is Petech's phrase used in his thoroughly, revised Second Edition of *Mediaeval History of Nepal*, 1984, p. 12) is only a *lokakāla* (abridged) form of the Kārttikādi current śaka which has to be computed from Thursday, October 18, AD 76. The Gokarṇa inscription of Aṃśuvarmā has finally sealed the fate of the late Nayarāj Pant's favourite theory that there was a powerful feudatory called 'Mānadeva II' because there is the so-called Mānadeva Saṃvat. That might be why Dineś Rāj Pant wrote 'the swan-song' of their theory in the following words:

> The inscription from Gokarṇa Bāluvā also sheds some new light on the history of Licchavi period; new facts will be known about

> Aṃśuvarmā. However, this inscription *sheds no light on the epoch eras in use in Licchavi period*.[78]

Dineś Rāj Pant jumps to such a desperate conclusion because in Chatre's tables for the expired śaka 535, there is an intercalation attested in Bhādra, or in Sewell's table for current śaka 536, in āśvina. Both should, according to Bhāradvāja's precepts as enunciated in the *adhimāsaprakaraṇa* of the DNTSS, result in Saṃvat 536 āśāḍha intercalation. In the Aṃśuvarmā's inscription from Gokarṇa, however, the intercalated month is Pauṣa. Unfortunately, neither the late Nayarāj Pant nor his disciples felt any need to verify the texts of *the adhimāsaprakaraṇa* to find out how many different versions are enunciated in *Sumati Siddhānta*. The fact that in the Gokarṇa inscription the intercalated month is Pauṣa, not āṣāḍha, does not, in any way, prove 'mathematically' that there was a King named Mānadeva II in Licchavi Nepal who founded the so-called 'Mānadeva Saṃvat' in śaka 498.

This was a sad finale of Nayarāj Pant and his inmates' 57-year old dismal enterprise and intellectual somersaults to prove 'mathematically' that there was a feudatory or King called 'Mānadeva II' because *Sumatitantra* (OR 3564, NS 467; NGMPP No B20/23, NS 495), *Harivaṃśa* NGMPP No. E6959; E 338/8 E 339/1, NS 775), and, of course, *Jātakajyā* (NGMPP No E 2051/16, NS 802) colophons mention a 'Mānadeva Saṃvat'. Parodying what Engels once wrote about Hegelian dialectics, it seems the late Nayarāj Pant, an ācārya in Siddhānta Jyautiṣa, made ancient Nepali history 'walk on its head'.[79]

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78 Dineś Rāj Pant, 1997, p. 3.

79 'The dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned its head, on which it was standing, and placed upon its feet.' Frederick Engels, 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy'. In Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*,Vol. II (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951, p. 350).

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Postscript

This paper was ready for publication in *Kailash* in summer 1997. I had discussed its contents with some of my colleagues and students. However, I held it up for some time as, for want of substantial contributions from Nepali scholars, *Kailash* had become irregular and nearly defunct since Charles Ramble left Kathmandu to join the Faculty of Oxford University. Instead of waiting indefinitely to see *Kailash* revive, I decided to publish it in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*.

The continued and concerted personal attacks launched against me, carried on for the last 30 years by Gyānmaṇi Nepāl, Mahes Rāj Pant and Dines Rāj Pant, the three erstwhile members of the now-defunct Itihās Saṃśodhan Maṇḍal, through their mouthpiece, *Pūrṇimā*, began with No 32 (1975). It was an attack on a book for whose conception I was responsible, but not with its actual editing, much less with its copy-editing because it came out when I was not in Nepal. Their attack continued in No 58 (1984), No 62 (1985), No 64 (1985), No 72 (1987) and No 92 (1998). They attacked me in no-uncertain terms and spread distorted interpretations of my interviews and my writings through yellow journalism.

My ignorance in the field of Nepal Studies is, of course, limitless and I do not deserve so much of their attention or resources unless, of course, my work in the field poses a major threat to their hobby-horse theories, i.e., lies perpetrated through the Nepali language press. The latest example of it is Dines Rāj Pant's response to my brief two-minute telephone interview—an interview I had neither seen nor was I shown before going to press (printed

in *The Gorkhāpatra*, dated Caitra 30, 2053). A month later, D.R. Pant published a rejoinder to me in *ājako Samācārapatra* of Jyeṣṭha 4, 2054. Similarly, Gyānmani Nepāl's *Mero Gurukulīya śkṣā ra Sahapāṭhī* (particularly pp. 110-114; 130-132) is nothing but a mean verbal attack on the late Dhanavajra Vajrācārya and me for reasons quite clear from his account itself, perpetrating such blatant lies as I being paid 'special allowance and facilities' as an Honorary Chief Editor of *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, or that the Nepal Research Centre paid us 'a special allowance' for translating and editing the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*. The truth, however, is that I had worked for six years (1984-1990) as the Chief Editor of *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* on an honorary basis, regularly editing 14 issues of the journal, and neither Dhanavajra nor I was paid a single penny for our translation/edition of the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī*.

Both of us were given not more than 10 copies of the book, and the late Dhanavajra got written permission from the Executive Director to get it published from the Nepal Research Centre.

At least, Gyānmaṇi Nepāl's books are collector's pieces, the pieces in which a student in the 21st century thinks of himself as an accomplished social scientist by learning four 'fundamental' Sanskrit textbooks by heart in nine years (Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyī*, Bhaṭṭī's *Kāvya*, Amarasimha's *Nāmāliṅgānusāśāsana*, Kalidasa's *Raghuvamśam*, and, of course, Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, though only as a historical reference book). His memorisation of these texts by rote has naturally misled him to absurd linguistic concepts. He thinks that *each word must have only one meaning in every context*. One of the great semantic resources of human language is polysymy (one word different meanings) as well as synonymy (different words one meaning). *Amarakośa*, for instance, has a separate section on polysymous words in Sanskrit. The word *go* has 13 different meanings, depending upon the textual context where the word is used. One may consult any dictionary of any language and find out how many senses and sub-senses a word may have. So, what is there to censure us for if we have, in our edition of the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvali*, glossed the word *aṅkāla*, *or aṅkāla bisyaṃ* as 'embraced', 'rewarded' or 'patronised' as three different meanings in three different contexts. Similarly, we have glossed *kośa* as 'treasure', not 'a treasury or store'. The treasure could be anything precious, a head-dress, a belt, an idol cover made of metal repoussé sheath etc. If Gyānmaṇī Nepāl does not know the difference between the two English words, *treasure* and *treasury*, he had better rush and look

up an English dictionary, particularly one which is better than the one he possesses. Similarly, another word he finds faulty in our translation is Skt. *saṃbhava*. Has this word only one meaning given by Nepāl? Or, has it at least 17 meanings, one of which is 'cohabitation', i.e., to live together. So, what is wrong in glossing this word as 'together with'? Similarly, Skt. *mahīpāla* is a common noun, which means a King or the King. But if it is a proper noun, it means a King named Mahīpāla. It may also mean both at the same time.

Nepāl claims that *he* has 'discovered' an ancient people called Nīpa, a republican community, which gave Nepal its name (1983). So, he derives *Nepāla* from *nīpa+āla*, the country of Nīpas, geographically lying at the foot of mountain. Already more than a century and a half ago that etymology had been proposed by Christian Lassen in his *Indische Althumskunde*.[80] This was rejected by Lévi as inappropriate, one which is simply based on the gloss of a scholiast.[81] The depth of Gyanmaṇi's knowledge of Linguistic Science can be fathomed from the following two quotes from his article, 'Nepāl: An Etymological Interpretation'. From the linguistic viewpoint it is the most ill-informed paper so far published on the topic, partly by misusing others' earlier publications, including Malla, 1980, and Malla 1984, without acknowledging the sources. Nepāl just goes on quoting different literary sources, right and left, without evaluating their historical validity. No wonder Nepāl comes to the following self-contradictory conclusions in one and the same paper:

1. (The Prakrit form *ṇiwāla*) provides us a solid basis to assert that 'Newār' was derived from 'Nepāl'.[82]
2. It is impossible to derive the word 'Newār' from 'Nepāl' and vice versa.[83]

I am neither an historian nor an astronomer, much less a Sanskritist. None of these sciences is my specialisation. I must have, therefore, *unknowingly* made mistakes of facts or interpretation in my past or present writings. However, I would have gladly welcomed constructive criticism and correction. Mahes Rāj Pant wrote a 64-page review of our work,

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80 Christian Lassen, *Indische Althumskunde*, Vol 1, p. 76, Note 3, 1876.
81 Lévi, II, 1905, p. 66.
82 Nepal, 1996, p. 140.
83 *Nepal*, 1996, p. 143.

nitpicking every possible flaw in the book, but he could gloss only a verse and eight mediaeval Newari words. Similarly, Gyānmaṇi Nepāl wrote a whole 78-page booklet on the modes of worshipping Paśupati, by raising hands over one's head, by touching and embracing the Linga, but he was able to gloss only three words, *prasa* (Skt. *sparśa*, touch), *uprahātha (Pkt*. by raising both hands over one's head?), and *aṅkāla bisyam* (Pkt. by embracing). Even in these three words, he fails to take notice of the Newari aspectual/benefactive modal auxiliary verbs, *cvaṅā* and *bisyam*. If *prasa* is touch, then what does *prasa cvanā* mean?

Had they any sound knowledge of medieval Newari they would have already published an edition of the manuscript because their contingent had already transcribed it in 1959. 'All members have jointly transcribed the Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī. We could not publish it then as we found it difficult to interpret,' wrote N.R. Pant et al (1987: Preface, p. 22) What prevented them from doing so since it is only a 48-folio manuscript, half of which is in hybrid Sanskrit? Their editorial skills are nakedly and palpably visible in their edition of the *Upadeśa* of Pṛthvinārāyaṇa śāhā, above all, in the dismal performance in editing *Sumatitantra* where they transliterate the Newar word *suye* (thirty) as *sūrya* (the Sun). Tribhuvan University was benumbed before the Indological world by this work—a work which Western and Indian siddhānta-jyautiṣa specialists did not want to review because it fails to take even elementary principles of textual criticism into consideration. One of the reasons why the University discontinued the project was the ignoble failure of this work published by the University.

In 1985, two years ahead of the publication of his father's *magnum opus*, Mahes Rāj Pant announced a blatant lie by writing that

> After seven years' continuous and rigorous labour our Father has finally proved both on the basis of mathematics and history that the first epoch era is śaka Saṃvat and the second one, Mānadeva Saṃvat. (M.R. Pant, 1985:24)

Similar is the case of the flagrant distortion of facts spread by D.R. Pant over the years:

> Hemrāj Sharma passed on the information that a new era was founded since Vikrama Saṃvat 633/AD 576 but Jayaswal did not accept his view

as is clear from his book. Since Bāburām āchārya decided that the new epoch era launched since Vikrama Saṃvat 633 was the epoch era used by Aṃśuvarmā and his successors, Totrarāj Pāndey and our father Nayarāj Pant's *Nepālako Itihās* (2004 BS), published from Kaśī by Totrarāj Pandey also reiterates the same view. Thus as Hemrāj's notice was accepted by other contemporary scholars this must be accepted as the consensus of all Nepali scholars.[84]

As it must have been clear from our investigation, nothing is more far from the actual truth. It was high time, therefore, that I responded to these so-called 'impeccable historians' by picking up the gauntlet they had thrown at my feet 30 years ago and expose their conceit and intellectual fraud.

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84 D.R. Pant, 1981, p. 11; first published in *Nepalese Culture*, Vol I, 1979, p. 8.

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Review of *A History of Nepal* by John Whelpton

A History of Nepal by John Whelpton; The University Press, Cambridge, 2005; pp. 235+key events, 20 illustrations, tables, 6 maps, biographical notes, glossary and index; Rs 600; ISBN 0 521 67141 8.

John Whelpton is a trained linguist, working as a language teacher in Hong Kong University. There, he came in contact with Nepali-language speaking British Gurkhas and developed an interest in Nepal after successfully completing a literary project of translating a travel diary of a military captain who accompanied Jang Bahadur Kuwar in his Europe tour in 1850. He collaborated with the late Martin Hoftun and William Raeper on a book on social and ideological analysis of contemporary Nepal. His *Kings, Priests and Soldiers: Nepalese Politics and the Rise of Jang Bahadur 1830-1857* (Delhi: 1991) was well-received in academic community in Nepal and abroad.

A History of Nepal is an overview of Nepal, particularly since the 1740s to 2003. Within the space of about 240 pages, Whelpton surveys the process of state formation in the Central Himalayas out of scores of principalities controlled by medieval feudatories. It is difficult to pinpoint in time when Nepal emerged as a state, either in Claessen's or in a Kautalyan sense. In all likelihood, it was run by provincial governors of Mauryas, Kushanas and then the Imperial Guptas who mention Nepal's ruler as a *pratyanta-nrpati* (border king) in ca. AD 360. This may very well be the cultural entity rather than a State. For one thing, even during the late Malla period Nepal Valley did not have a standing army

though it had its own coinage or other paraphernalia and limbs of a political state. Because of its rugged topography, fragmented by transversal mighty rivers, snowy ranges and intractable ranges, tribal chiefdoms thrived late unto historical times. Few paramount rulers could have held the realm single-handed because of the incessant nature of migration from the north, south, east and the west.

Whelpton tries to sum up the process of political unification and cultural hegemony of Brahminical values in the central Himalayas mainly as an outcome of the threat of Islam and the rising power of East India Company in the sub-continent. This may be so in the initial days of the Gorkhali state, but this theory does not hold much water when one reflects upon figures such as Rana Bahadur Shah, who would have been delighted to live in Banaras on East India Company's pension as long as he could rather than reign or rule a kingdom torn apart by his own kinsmen and retinue. Neither 'unification' nor 'Sanskritisation' are happy and adequate terms to describe what went on in Nepal since the 1740s because neither explains why it took Prithivi Narayan Shah three battles and 25 years of dogged belligerent determination, not to speak of treachery, espionage, blockade and barbarous treatment, to conquer a tiny principality of less than 8,000 in Kirtipur whereas the same Gorkhali power overran the whole Himalayas from Kumaon-Garhwal to Tista River in less than 25 years.

Although he does not take a 'dates-and-dynasties' approach to political history, Whelpton's interest is in the achievements and failures of the Shahs and the Ranas, more than in 'classical or cultural' Nepal. So he treats the rest of Nepalese history too perfunctorily, telescoping nearly a millennium and a half in less than 10 pages. His chronology of 'Key Events' is even more revealing, compressing 130,000 BC to the establishment of Capuchin Mission in Kathmandu in 1715 in less than a page! In this sense, the title of Whelpton's book is misleading: it is only the History of Nepal: 1740 to 2003. Just as there are different 'Nepals' there are also different 'Histories', depending upon one's preferences, as it were. Whelpton's is focused on 'Great Men', on Prithivi Narayan Shah, 'with a look of determination in his eyes, and his right hand pointing towards the skywards' intent upon expansion, with sky as its limit. Chandra Man Maskey had painted a masterpiece of this man, seated upon the Chandragiri ridge, looking at the opulence of the Kathmandu Valley, with intent and gleaming eyes. It is merely a matter

of interpretation whether one calls it a 'vision' of unified Nepal or a vulture's gaze upon its prey. Perhaps, the only social scientist that divulged this mysterious gaze was the late economic historian, Mahesh C. Regmi, who said that the sole motivating dynamo of Gorkhali militarism was an unquenchable greed for land and income from it. At least, Prithivi Narayan's own letters from the trenches are in a totally different tenor from his so-called 'Divine Counsel'. The two are so different in style and substance that they could hardly be the work of the same man. Besides, coming from a rural background of Gorkha, his espousing the cause of economic mercantilism is totally unconvincing in the history of economic ideas.

The fraternal feuds among the brothers and sardars of Prithivi Narayan Shah following the occupation of the valley for power sharing seems to prove nothing other than this acquisitive instinct of the rural elite. That the rise of Bhimsen Thapa, or of Jang Bahadur Kunwar Thapa Chetri or of the Shumshers are only the apotheosis of this power-struggle, constantly being hatched in the Nepali court among the clans who descended from *takure* princelings. Among Whelpton's gallery of great men are, of course, the architects of dynastic fortunes founded on the ashes and ruins of each other—triggered by murder, bloodshed, banishment, and recurrent 'revisions in the roll' of pure blue blood, proving the now trite dictum: Kingship knows no kinship. To label this power structure 'a Hindu State' is a euphemism of a sort, because there was only a despot or other at its head, commanding contingents of soldiers, always willing to kill or be killed. Before the rise of Bhimsen Thapa, the Gorkhali army was a ramshackle organisation; the State only a brutally efficient organisation for raising revenue and taxes of all kinds. Landownership was a matter of the patriarch's whim: to be granted or withdrawn on the evidence of personal loyalty. It was only with Jung Bahadur Kunwar's Mulki Ain of 1854 that the Gorkhali state began to have a semblance of civil and military structure to be administered by verifiable legal code by courts of justice and revenue offices in place.

The ruling ideology of the Shah-Rana despotism was neither Hinduism nor Brahmanism, though they showed a superficial respect for the cow, the Brahmin and the Hindu dharmashastra. To call their culture 'Sanskritic' is only a parody of the timeless values enshrined in the tradition. The Shahs imitated the courtly practices of the Moguls

and the Ranas were increasingly attracted to 'Westernised' life-styles, and so visibly documented in their mahals, durbars and stucco palaces modelled on the 19th-century Victorian mansions. There is no doubt that despite their obscure social origins they laid a dubious claim to Rajput origins and made this claim a legitimate basis for all their social climbing, and the greedy clientele Brahmin immigrants from the plains supported these by lending them a political sacred thread to climb ever higher in the social ladder. It was not for nothing that from the time of Jang Bahadur Kunwar culminating in Chandra's tiger shooting expeditions with Emperors of British India, there was nothing less than a love-hate relationship between the Ranas and British India. The high tide of the Rana Rule was punctuated with two World Wars in which the Rana military and financial support to the British even surpassed the aid of Jang in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Thus Whelpton's claim that 'the Shamshers projected themselves as the guardian of the social order enshrined in Nepal's legal system' is not the whole truth just as the statement 'the Shamshers did try to foster a common Nepalese identity, centred, of course, around themselves'. If ever the Ranas ever played what the author calls 'the Hindu card' it was only when they thrashed the social reformer Madhav Raj Joshi for preaching a protestant interpretation of the Vedas or when a plebian non-Brahmin, Madhav Raj's son, Sukra Raj Joshi addressed the first-ever public meeting in the heart of Kathmandu and preached the doctrine of *karma* according to the *Gita*!

In itself, history is an uninteresting narrative if it ignores the causes underlying the events which punctuate it, the causes which bring changes not only in the rulers and dynasties, but also in social, economic, political, and, above all, cultural life. As we come nearer to our own days, Whelpton devotes some attention to these trends. But trends are not the causes, but only their symptoms. As an analyst and observer, Whelpton is generous, sympathetic, but mostly sweeping, in identifying 'the trends'. In Chapter 4, Whelpton surveys the troubled half century between 1950 and 1991, under the heading 'The Monarchy in Ascendance', covering both domestic politics and foreign relations. The '*Kranti* of 2007' was an unfinished project, patched up hurriedly in mid-stream by Nehru who saw a destabilised Nepal as a potential threat to India, particularly with the communist takeover in China. In the following decade, the political parties, particularly the Nepali Congress

and the Nepal Communist Party split into scores of rival political factions, contesting for royal favour and a place in the political sun. The case of the Communist Party is exemplary: founded in 1949, by 1960 it split into about 22 factions, each leader holding on to an individualised interpretation of the gospel. The fact was that Nepal never had political parties as mature political institutions based on explicit programmes to which their cadres were formally and morally committed. They were only loose groupings of individuals motivated by personal aspirations. So, the loyalty was to the individual who can give them a share in the pie, not to policies, programmes, much less to 'ideology'—democratic or radical. They were nurtured in a culture, which Max Weber would have called 'patrimonial', and no wonder that the multiparty parliamentary democratic experiment failed after a decade of trial and error, with the Monarchy emerging as the uncontested source and seat of power. The role of China and India in the consolidation of the power of the King is only a footnote to the Teng Tsiao-Ping doctrine that as long as the cat catches the mice it doesn't matter whether it is red or not.

Whelpton's treatment of the Panchayat decades is interesting: he seemed to think that it was an outcome of 'a freak in south Asian history, almost entirely an unexpected development of Sino-Indian Border War of 1962'. But for it, an Indian economic blockage in October 1962 in support of an insurgent Nepali Congress would have put an effective brake on King Mahendra's autocratic ambitions. As Whelpton puts it, 'the king was rescued by the outbreak of war between India and China the following month. India now needed Mahendra's cooperation, and on Nehru's request Suvarna called off the armed campaign.' (p. 99) This is yet another example of 'the Great Man of History' favoured by the turn of historical events, if you like. However, such interpretations ignore the social base of King Mahendra, who, among other things, propounded the doctrine of 'class coordination' so as not to hurt his feudal power base, harping upon the 'Kingdom of the Soul and Heaven' based on ancient Hindu scriptures. Nationalism became the doctrinaire base for legitimising the monarchy, the crown being the symbol of national unity and sovereignty. However, the annexation of Sikkim in 1974 and the emergence of Bangladesh out of dismembered East Pakistan, with India as an emancipating midwife, narrowed the options of the Nepalese establishment, and the challenges to the monolithic system with all political powers concentrated in royal hands became more and

more politically visible. There were as many as three amendments to the 1962 Constitution of Nepal, ending finally in a referendum to endorse 'a reformed Panchayat system' in 1980.

Whelpton does not offer any satisfactory answer to the vexing question: why it took such a long time for the Panchayat to collapse and why it crumbled when it finally did? If it were not again a question of an auspicious and conducive 'national and international environment', especially the role of the friends of democracy and of Nepali democrats, what triggered it? Whelpton seemed to blame, of all great men of history, Marich Man Singh and his unpopularity, more naively for his being the first Newar Prime Minister or Mukhtiyar! (p. 111)

History, of course, means different things to different scholars and readers. To Whelpton, fortunately, it is not just an unrevealing account of dynastic and political upheavals. At least, in part he explores the underlying forces at work to stir these changes: demographic changes, economic growth, social and cultural influences penetrating the arteries of a society. Part of his explanation probably lies in the movement of peoples into the Himalayas from all cardinal directions, at first from west to east, then from north to south, now from the mountains to the Tarai. More recently, the flow of the displaced population from rural poverty to the urban centres has only been overtaken by those displaced by political conflict. However, the failure of a planned and mixed economy in the last five decades to cope with the rising population and the soaring social and economic expectations are at the heart of the social and political discontent. The State in Nepal has always been the stronghold of a few elite families, the so-called *thar-ghar*, and this has not changed. Superficial changes in the political system did not succeed in making any dent in the exclusivist political structure in the last half a century. Whelpton rapidly surveys the development 'achievements and failures' fuelling the disillusionment of a democratic Nepal. The onset of a deepening crisis was, however, not entirely caused by social, demographic and economic factors alone. Nepal's topography is in itself a major challenge to any development planner. So is its geopolitical location as a landlocked country surrounded on three sides by the Indian Republic and the northern borders all snow-clad, accessible only seasonally through limited narrow passes. Perhaps, the single factor that accelerated the public disillusionment with the system was corruption, factionalism and callous lack of legislative sensitiveness to

urgent social and economic issues. That the system is not flexible and responsive is all too nakedly evident when Parliament voted out the Bills for land ceiling, the reservations for dalits, ethnic minorities and women during Sher Bahadur Deuba's terminating days. The rise of social and ethnic movements and regional autonomy in Limbuwan and Madhes in particular are mainly symptoms of this malaise. Among other issues the Maoist insurgents successfully tapped this.

Whelpton's treatment of the historicity of Nepal as a nation-state, now on the brink of being listed a failed state, is based on the strong assumption that, 'Nepal's emergence into the post-colonial world as an independent state was not preordained but the result of a chain of historical accidents. These included both the emergence of a leader of the caliber of Prithivi Narayan Shah at a crucial point in the seventeenth century (sic!) and also his successors' ability in the following century to adapt efficiently to the realities of British dominance in South Asia' (p. 235). He concludes with an ominous note, 'the strength of the reality behind this formal facade (of independence—KPM) remains to be determined' (p. 235).

A History of Nepal lists more than 250 items in its bibliography; however, only five are in Nepali. It gives the reader an impression that the account is mostly based on secondary sources available in English and other Western languages. The 34-page long Chapter 6 on 'Lifestyles, Values and Identities: Changes in Nepalese Society, 1951-1991' (pp. 154-188) is a fascinating store of personal observations, but whether it is empirical social history is arguable. The longish section on the Royal Palace Massacre of June 1, 2001 (pp. 211-216) ends in a journalistic bathos: 'a fresh and full enquiry into the whole affair would nevertheless be most likely to confirm the official version of the events within the Tribhuvan Sadan' (p. 216). This is a most unlikely statement to come from an aspiring historian of Nepal, well-versed in courtly affairs.

The book has some useful tables, charts, maps and a glossary of unfamiliar terms for the newcomers to the field. Its 'Biographical Notes' on about 82 historical and colourful persons is a disproportionately mixed bag of patricians and plebeians, with too many Shahs and Ranas, perhaps. Sadly, the text is punctuated with no small number of factual errors, particularly in dates and names, some of them too gross to believe. The book is a pleasant surprise and smooth reading. At least, it is not yet another 'historical account' by a pontificating British civil servant,

or a medical surgeon, a post-master general, a military colonel, or a travelling emissary with no formal academic training in the rigours of historiography. The choice of an unsavoury picture of a street scene in Birganj in the early 1970s on the cover-page seems to have nothing to do with history nor with Nepal-ancient, modern or in the making.

28

The Early Mediaeval Inscriptions of Nepāla-maṇḍala

Early Mediaeval Inscriptions edited by Dhanavajra Vajracharya; Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, 2011, with Nagari transliteration, Nepali translation, and commentary; black-and-white plates; pp. 381; ISBN 978-9937-524-19-3.

Mediaeval Epigraphy Project: Old and New

For more than a decade and a half, since joining the Institute of Nepalese Studies on July 10, 1971, the late Dhanavajra Vajrācārya (1932-1994) (DVV, hereafter) was consistently productive, completing and publishing works on the history and epigraphy of Nepal almost every year. Then, something happened in 1984 which he probably did not foresee: a relatively unknown but influential person came to head this research institute. DVV had been entertaining the hope that he would be made the *de facto* chief of the on-going National History Project. But, unfortunately, the newly appointed Executive Director, Kumar Khadga Bikram Shaha, chose a relatively young person to look after the Project. This was probably an unexpected but major shock to DVV, leading to a noticeable decline in his institutional productivity and participation thereafter. Soon, he succumbed to a gradual decline in his physical condition as well, ultimately affected by diabetes which proved fatal, ending his life in 1994, prematurely at the age of 62.

Among the projects DVV took up at Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies during his productive phase, the Mediaeval Epigraphy was undoubtedly a major one consisting of a manuscript-file of more than 1,500

inscriptions in Sanskrit, or Sanskrit mixed with old Newārī, inscribed mostly on stone in different Nepalese scripts, dated between NS 107 and 880. The first volume consisted of 145 early mediaeval inscriptions in Sanskrit and Classical Newārī from the Nepal Valley, dated between NS 107 and 602, in Nāgarī transliteration, with Nepali translation and, in some cases, elaborate commentary relating to social, cultural and political history which interested and preoccupied him mostly. Most of these inscriptions were, of course, already published in local journals. They were collected and published later on by D.R. Regmi in two volumes in 1965/66. Unreliable as Regmi's readings were, DVV had, however, read their texts all over again, either from the extant rubbings in the collection of the National Archives, or from the original inscriptions in situ. He had submitted an initial draft of this work to the CNAS Research Committee for consideration for publication in summer 1985. CNAS had limited publication funds, and there was a long queue of research reports. The new Director had his own innovative agenda. As DVV saw little hope of seeing this voluminous and forbiddingly costly project in print, he had literally dumped all the hefty files under the jute carpet in his CNAS room. When I took Professor Yujiro Hayashi and Ms Kazue Iwamoto of the Toyota Foundation, Tokyo, to meet him and discuss the possibilities of editing and publishing the inscriptions under the aegis of the Toyota Foundation that was exactly where he pulled out the dusty files from. As the Foundation was positive in its initial response, I wrote a proposal for a Three-Year International Grant beginning FY 1986-1989, covering a research as well as publication grant of about NRs 2.1 million. By 1994, because of a gradual decline in his mental and physical condition, DVV and his associates in the project were unable to complete a press-ready version of any of the planned four volumes. So, more than half of the grant funds were never disbursed. However, the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies posthumously published a volume of Inscriptions from Lalitpur in 1999 out of its own publication funds.

Contacts with DVV

As our academic training and intellectual backgrounds were so divergent, my acquaintance with DVV was incidental before we began to meet more frequently in the CNAS Research Committee, in seminars and finally in the Nepal Bhasha Dictionary Committee (founded on January 26, 1980). DVV resigned from NBDC in 1982. Earlier than the launching of the

Mediaeval Epigraphy Project, I had translated his transcription of a complex Hybrid Sanskrit-Newārī text into English and helped him to get the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* published by the Nepal Research Centre in June 1985. As I am neither an epigraphist nor a historian by training nor by profession this Introduction should have been written by someone more qualified or more close to DVV, perhaps by his lineal disciples or by his classmates. However, after reading some of the undeserving attacks on the late DVV after his death by his own celebrated disciples and classmates I decided to pick up this work in the interest of historical research.

DVV's Perspective on Nepāla-maṇḍala

By the time DVV started the epigraphy project he was already an established name in Nepali historiography as well as in epigraphic studies. His training as an epigraphist and Sanskritist was sound though his perspective as a historian was constrained by a number of untested dogmas of the Samśodhan Maṇḍala school of which he was the member-secretary. The basic limitations of his methodology were to see Nepalese society and culture through the prism of a limited number of classical Indian texts. For instance, in the mediaeval Nepal Valley, there was no standing army, no revenue offices, no courts of justice, except ramshackle outfits assembled at the sweet will of the ruling King. Even in the late-Malla period, the far and few between gates in the city ramparts were closed each night after the 'outsiders' left the city. The Capuchin priests had left mocking accounts of 'the warfare' among the squabbling city-states as nearly a melodramatic make-believe. DVV regrets that such a State was 'weak' that is, not centralised enough to tame the unruly feudal lords controlling bits and pieces of the land.

We do not know how the ancient Licchavi state came to an end. The nearly 200-odd surviving records of their rule do not mention any *pura*, only *grāmas* and a few *draṅgas*, or revenue collection centres. The only exception is *śāmbhapura*, the city of Shiva, probably Devapāṭan which occurs in the undated Nārāyaṇa chaur inscription of about mid-8th century AD. This inscription alone gives a layout of an urban site with wide roads, pillars, *preṣkaṇa-maṇḍapa* methodology or *dabali*, gardens, bridges, *vihāras* and wells, and some temple sites, gates from/to the Royal Courtyard. The collapse of this State must have been similar to the commonplace South Asian tale. A gradual decline and fall of the Licchavi dynasty or other contending ruling clans could be because of internal

strife and unending conflict of divisive social, economic and cultural interests, so often betrayed in their documents. The 19th-century vernacular chronicles, in turn, wax eloquently on violent fires, floods and landslides which swept away these ancient cities and their monuments. The mediaeval chronicles also document devastating earthquakes, famines, epidemics and hailstorms. However, by the AD 1350s Devapāṭan was merely a capital in ritual and nominal sense. Several principalities such as Banepā/Bhonta, Palāúco/Poha and Pharping/Solaṅki Rābuttas had powerful Royalties contending with the Tripura Palace in Bhaktapur as the *de facto* seat of political power in Nepāla-maṇḍala. Each locality in Kathmandu had a Thakuri king; there were at least eight ruling families controlling the upper-middle and lower parts of early medieval Kathmandu. Seven Mūrtyaṅga Mahāpātra controlled most of Pāṭan. Nuwākoṭ, Pharping, Banepā and Palāúco had each contending families of feudal lords. Banepā and Palāúco contested with Tripura Palace over lordship of the kingdom. Thus, DVV was literally accurate in writing that the Centre was 'weak', except that there appears to be no political centre anywhere visible in early mediaeval Nepal.

A major striking difference between the ancient inscriptions and the mediaeval ones is that almost none of the extant 145 mediaeval inscriptions is issued directly from the Royal Chancery and none mentions the name of the Royal Palace even where the donor or executants were the Royalty. Among the striking points DVV makes in his commentary, he remarks that there is an almost total absence of *śāsana*, or administrative or law-making or law-giving inscriptions. Documents such as the palmleaf from Banepā, unfortunately not included in this volume, issued by Arjunadeva, dated NS 485 Aśvina śukla 9, is more of an exception than the rule. The early mediaeval State clearly had a number of limbs missing by eastern norms of Kautalya or the Western concepts as outlined by Claessen.[1] Despite pompous titles and wordy phrasing of the panegyrics assumed by the rulers, they exercised tenuous political, economic or cultural control over their realm.

The exact geographical extent of this realm can be charted or reconstructed by tracing the spatial and geographic distribution of the inscriptions. There were two focal locations where the inscriptions are heavily distributed—Devapāṭan around the Paśupati temple complex

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1 Claessen, 1978.

and the Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇaa temple complex in Sānkhu. The other heavy concentrations are in the Buddhist monasteries, the vihars of Patan. A few early mediaeval inscriptions are located in Thimi, Pharping, Banepā, Nālā, Sāṅgā and Panauti. A few *viṣayas* or administrative divisions are mentioned in copperplates. However, the precise geographic location as well as political status of these is at best debatable. DVV had conflicting interpretations.[2] That *Nepāla-maṇḍala* is nothing more than an alliance and working consortium of warring feudal lords is made more than clear by the periodic pacts such as the one dated NS 573. Among other things, it illustrates that in politics the rulers of early mediaeval Nepal Valley were familiar with Kautalya's '*maṇḍala* theory' of foreign policy!

The Epoch Era Used in Mediaeval Inscriptions

All the inscriptions compiled here are dated in *Nepāla-saṃvat*, an epoch-era launched on Tuesday, October 20, 879 AD. Before Saṃvat 128, it had no label of identification. It is a *Kārttikādi amānta* luni-solar calendar identical to its predecessor which was in use till Saṃvat 303. Dates are mostly given in numerals or at times in words standing for numbers, mostly in versified inscriptions. Sometimes, both systems are used in the same inscription. Commonly used are three or five astronomical elements the Hindu *paúcāṅga*, or the five components, the year, the month, bright/dark fortnight, lunar *tithi*, weekday, accompanied by other elements such as the *yoga*, the *karaṇa* and *muhūrta*, including the zodiac in which the Sun/the Moon is in station.

Major Structural Components and Characteristics

The inscriptions are in Sanskrit—the language of gods, mixed liberally with secular details spelt out in Newārī, the language of lesser mortals, particularly those relating to donations in land, in kind or cash. Newārī enters mediaeval epigraphy after NS 293/AD 1172. Few inscriptions are entirely in Newārī yet, and when it is used its meaning is none too clear. So, DVV or his colleagues have often left these documents without a translation (e.g., No 49, dated NS 454; or No 125 dated NS 585).

References to cash donations are conspicuous by absence. This alone testifies to the nature of the economy which was based on feudal

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2 See, his forceful arguments to situate them outside the Kathmandu Valley in pp. 19-27 and his second thoughts in a footnote in p. 57 of the book.

landownership and the *jajamāniī* system of exchange of ritual/professional services. Royal or elite donations are generally phrased in high style, studded with set formula and elevated diction, praising the donor/executants, his/her relations and their family/clan/dynasty in more words than necessary. The intended benefits from donations to gods are often spelt out in no uncertain words, mostly worldly advancement—the progeny, wealth, health, material well-being and the ultimate felicity and ease of entry into Heaven, *Vaikuṇṭha/Sukhāvati*. At times, the physical destruction of the King's enemies or regular and timely rainfall is among the wish lists in epigraphic carts.

Though the number of 145 documents distributed over 500 years is not an impressive one, a closer look at a sample of these texts gives us an opportunity to peep into the values the society, especially its dominant and affluent members, lived by, and their deep-rooted belief system. The sole purpose of these scripts is, apparently, *puṇya* or *kīrti*, a pious deed which is hoped to last 'forever'. If those entrusted with the project discontinues the offering of delicacies, sacrifices, lamps or a flow of honey, curds and milk—the five nectars—they are cursed to be sent straight to the lowest circles of Hell! This unsavoury prospect of eternal perdition was then thought of as the infallible insurance against the uncertainties of posterity.

For someone confined to the life of an exile in the West, reading these inscriptions in the early decades of the new millennium, is like a trip to an ideological outer space. What is astonishing is the degree of certitude in all the statements these scripts make—the assurance of Heaven or the threat of Hell—promised by organised religions, Hinduism and Buddhism alike, which formed the bedrock of social and moral order in mediaeval Nepalese society.

The Scripts

The scripts used in the inscriptions compiled here are a lineal descendant of Eastern Kuṭilā, an angular nail-headed cursive style which began to appear in ancient Nepalese inscriptions in the 7th century AD. The late epigraphist Shankar Man Rajavamshi had published a detailed analysis of each glyph, syllable, numeral and ligature of the paleography in *Licchavi Lipi Saṃgraha*, a landmark essay in this area, followed by his 'The Evolution of the Devanagari Script' (1974). Hem Raj Shakya's handbooks (1953, 1974) and Table of Nepalese

Scripts (1963) are also pioneering efforts to take up the field of paleography systematically. Among the western scholars, Bendall's analysis and tables attached to his Cambridge *Catalogue* (1883) are of paramount importance for any serious study of medieval paleography. Maheś Rāj's several incisive papers closely analyse and discuss the paleographic issues relating to mediaeval inscriptions, manuscripts, and rolled palmleafs.

A majority of inscriptions compiled here are written either in Pācu-mola script or in Bhùjiṃ-mola. Some use both Raújanā and Pācu-mola, or exclusively Raújanā (undated inscription of Vijayakāmadeva at Ichaṅgu and Svayambhū or Emperor Ming Ta'I's letter of authorisation to the feudatory lord of Palāúco, NS 535). A few undated ones (e.g., No 1) are dated on paleographic basis. By and large, pāchu-mola/ bhujinmola are demotic and Raújanā, hieratic in use, reserved for copying sacred texts, and mantras and monograms of esoteric Buddhism.

The Rubbings: The Problem of Verification and Variant Readings

Nearly all the older rubbings used here are collected in the National Archives. They were pioneering love's labour of the late Pandit Siddhiharsha Vajrācārya in the early decades of the last century. In the present volume, a number of transliterations/translations were first published by Bhagwanl Indraji, Sylvain Lévi, and Cecil Bendall, often aided by Siddhiharsha as usual in many instances for foreign scholars. Some were published by Shakya/Vaidya, Shankar Man Rajavamshi (No 59), Gyan Mani Nepal (No 136), Mahes Raj Pant (No 107), Diwakar Acharya (No 22) and Uddava Acharya (No 54). Nearly 100 inscriptions were already published ones, mostly by Nepali scholars in local journals like *Sanskrit Sandesh, Abhilekha Saṃgraha, Pūrṇimā* and *Ancient Nepal*. These were later compiled by D.R. Regmi. The rest are from the Cāngu Nārāyaṇa Temple from a single work by Khanal (1983). The unpublished ones are: Nos 17, 33, 53, 70, 77, 82, 88, 90, 92, 94, 103, 104, 106, 112, 119, 121, 122, 133, 134, 135 and 141. Though there are notes on the sources, a major editorial weakness of the late DVV was totally ignoring variant readings of these published sources, and the difficulty of tracing the improved readings, if any, done by him. For the aspirant scholar the only way out is to compare DVV's readings with published sources and compare both with the facsimiles/rubbings of the inscriptions, wherever that is possible.

Anusāra, Ardha virāma, or Both?

Part of the reason for controversies surrounding the problems of variant readings is the sad state of preservation of inscriptions and documents. Variant readings of numerals/ligatures and diacritics/punctuation marks are too common among the experts who have published the documents from the mediaeval Nepal Valley based on older rubbings preserved in the National Archives. Besides, a high density of textual material on the one hand and a coexistence of divergent scripts and languages on the other make readings divergent from source to source.

To cite only two telling examples, the late DVV read the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvali,* transliterated it meticulously into Nāgarī from photo prints. He had used glass plate photos as well. On the basis of his transliteration, a facsimile edition was published in June 1985. Soon after the printing was complete, he revisited the transliteration he had done and submitted a list of errata consisting of more than two pages, claiming that he was not used to reading texts from photo plates! When his pupil in the *gurukula* published a critical review of the facsimile edition, among other things, he pointed out more than 350 amendments to DVV's readings. That list did not include the most controversial issue, i.e., the interpretation of a ligature used in mediaeval orthography resembling the roman semi-colon. In the old Bengali script it is used for an *anusvāra*. Some Nepali epigraphists transliterate it as *anusvāra,* others as an *ardha- virāma,* others as an *anusvāra* followed by an *ardha virāma* yet others as -- *ṃ*. DVV was not too consistent nor was Shankar Man Rajvamshi too sure.

To this confusion was added a further complication for the Nepal Bhasha Dictionary Committee when its compilation team came up with a list of 412 'corrections in folios 29a-63a, the Newārī part of the GV', one of the source manuscripts, with a note saying that the punctuation mark, interpreted as - *ṃ*- by DVV, is an *anusvāra,* and that 'alternative readings are possible where the text is poorly preserved'! Our hope of preparing 'an authoritative transcription' of such complex texts and documents turned a remote prospect, if not unattainable.

State of Research on Nepalese Paleography

Most inscriptions are, fortunately, dated though not all contain the name of the reigning King or ruler. There has been hardly any serious research on the origins or evolution of Nepalese scripts comparable, for instance,

with the work of the late Rakhal Das Bannerji's classic on the *Origin of the Bengali Script* (University of Calcutta, 1919). Of what little is available mention may be made of the work of Shankar Man Rajvamshi's paper, 'The Evolution of Devanagari' (first published in *Kailash*, Vol II, Nos 1/2, 1974, pp. 23-98). He summarises cursorily the five centuries of paleographic ups and downs in the following few sentences:

> Ancient Newārī script evolved from Licchavi script; Bhujinmola came out of ancient Newārī, Kummola out of Bhujimmola, Golamola out of Kummola, Raújanā out of Golamola. All these scripts evolved and changed gradually...When Pachumola came to be used Golamola, Raújanā, and Litumola too were in use. Later on Pachumola lasted, whereas other scripts didn't survive, and this script came to be known as 'the prevalent Newārī script.' (p. 39)

This is none too helpful for dating any undated document, particularly when the Department of Archaeology also claims that 'the varieties are merely those of the lines at the top which in Newārī is called *mola*'.[3] In the absence of any diagnostic letters or ligatures such generalised statements do not help scholars to date documents and inscriptions with no date. Cursive styles in palm-leaf or inscriptions are 'idiosyncratic', to say the least, so that they can be identified neither by time nor by locations. Thus, the assignment of inscription No 1 from the Hanuman Dhoka Palace courtyard to the 10th century in this volume, like others, is only the guesswork of a noted scholar which deserves to be verified. After all, verification of every single word is, as Salomon puts it, 'the essence of epigraphic study'.

As the sources in which these inscriptions were first published are so diverse, ranging from the publications of Bhagwanlal Indraji in 1880 to the present, from the late Siddhiharsha Vajrācārya to Uddhav Acharya, from the pioneering works of Baburam Acharya, Nayaraj Pant, Yogi Naraharinatha to their associates and disciples, the authenticity and verification is problematic. The sad state of the art of reading the mediaeval inscriptions of Nepal is more than evident if one cares to compare DVV's painstaking readings with the careless transliterations published in the past, for example, by D.R. Regmi as No LVI in his

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3 Department of Archaeology, 2005.

Medieval Nepal, Vol. III, 1965, pp. 58-61, or by Gyanmani Nepal in *History of Medieval Nepal*, 2005, as Appendix 8, pp. 341-342, or Hari Ram Joshi's 'Medieval Inscriptions', serialised in *Ancient Nepal*, Nos 53-58, as Inscription No 78, in *Ancient Nepal*, No 58, (June-July, 1980), pp. 6-8. The unpublished ones appearing in this compilation for the first time are, however, less than a couple of dozen. What the late Dhanavajra Vajrācārya had done here was to verify the earlier readings, translate afresh in many instances, and write elaborate commentary on topics that interested him. By undertaking this labour he has made these documents more accessible to a larger community of scholars who are not ordinarily familiar with the older scripts and the Sanskrit or older Newārī language used here. Although skills in reading these scripts have begun to be revived lately the knowledge of 'epigraphic Sanskrit' and older forms of Newārī are still hard to come by. With the demise of Thakur Lal Manandhar, Prem Bahadur Kansakar and Dhanavajra Vajrācārya we have lost the whole storehouse of linguistic skills in older forms of Newārī much before a new generation of scholars could step in.

The Foundations of Munificence

The economic basis of religious munificence in early mediaeval Nepali society was the affluence of the landed class, the *bhāro* or *bhadraloka*, earning surplus harvest from the fertility of soil consisting of an alluvial surface which was once the bed of a prehistoric lake. The location of the Valley on the trade route of a flourishing entrepot trade between Tibet and India helped a talented and skilled community of craftsmen to launch an economy of long-distance trade, particularly during the heyday of Mongol rule in Tibet. Some of the Chinese Emperors even mistook Nepal for a 'Buddhist land' and issued letters of imperial patronage and authorisation to local feudatories.[4] They proudly assumed titles like *Chong-Mahātha*, i.e., merchant minister!

The extant inscriptions, however, are remarkably silent about the forms of taxation on the commoners in general and the peasantry in particular. Taxation in cash or land revenue *(poṭā)* paid to the State was probably nominal as the rates till the 1950s were just about Re 0.50 per *ropani*. However, the extant registers of royal or temple accounts and the diary

4 See Ming Tie's Letter to Shaktiramsiṃha Vardhana of Palāúco dated NS 535, No. 87 in this compilation.

books speak eloquently on multiple forms of taxation in cash and kind, the so-called *seva-ku* (probably from *Skt. sevā*, service, *kū*, from *kuta*, rent), i.e., voluntary presents, during the later Malla period. The system of extortion in support of too-numerous social events must have continued from the past. Although, on the surface of things, these numerous 'payments for social events' appear voluntary presents to the members of the Royalty on their wedding or initiation, in actual fact they were compulsory extortions designed to meet the costs of elaborate rituals and lavish feasts sponsored by the Court. Innumerable public rituals and private offerings are mentioned in inscription after inscription, and even then these must have been costly projects lasting for days. The gifts to the presiding priests and ritual specialists, in cash or kind, were often specified in manuals. Some of these, such as *vṛkhotsarga dāna*, ran into an entire ensemble of household goods.

Ritual Extravaganza, *Dhrota/Dharahpau* and *Seva-ku*

In the National Archives, there is an impressive collection of official records and accounts books from the later Malla period, of a species of manuscripts listed in its catalogues as *Vahi* or *Dharota* or *Dharapau*. Some of these texts have already been published by Cundā Vajrācārya and J.L.Vaidya. Among other things, these texts reveal the sources of Royal income as well as the excesses of their obsessive expenses on rituals, feasts, dresses, decorations and ornaments. Some of the inscriptions compiled here can be cited as brilliant instances of similar extravaganza. Take the case of the Paśupati Copperplate, dated NS 567. The total area of lands donated to a memorial trust for daily, monthly and annual offerings to Paśupati in the memory of Samsāradevī, King Yakṣamalla's late mother, was more than 80 *ropani* (a *ropani* measures 74 feet by 74 feet) yielding about 320 *muris* of paddy as well as grains, not to mention other cash crops. According to M.R. Pant's research on the current status of this trust or *guthi* and its lands, a *pujāri* comes every morning with an austere little plate and throws its contents with little qualm and less piety in front of the temple! Such are the ravages of time, or more specifically, of social changes in the last half a millennium.

***Biruda, Praśasti* and the Power Relations**

The inscriptions compiled here are the scripts of a social, economic and political order where the King was the *param-bhattaraka-parameśvara*,

Great Lord, the Supreme God, King of Kings—the sole repository of social and moral law and authority—one who rules by the divine charisma of his birth in the family of Raghu, as a distant successor of the Solar Clan. The *biruda* or *praśasti* assumed or used for the early mediaeval rulers preceding the Mallas were no less preposterous though they ruled a newly settled realm, barely risen out of the ashes of the Licchavis. The phrases and formula of power equation reflected the sources of inspiration, drawn in part from the north Indian ruling families (e.g., *mūrtyaṅga mahāpātra-vīra-nārāyaṇa, daitya- nārāyaṇa, parameśvara param bhaṭṭaāraka, param maheśvara, mahārājadhirāja,* or *mahātha chong, poha* after the Tibetan-*poḥ,* Lord, and *Chong,* a merchant). They assumed local deities such as Paśupati or Māneśvarī as their *iṣṭadevatā* or clan-deity, whose favour they tirelessly sought and seem to have received for ever. Even ministers in the royal council did not hesitate to call themselves *mahārājadhirāja* or *mantrādhirāja*, the king of ministers.

Most of the feudal lords were undoubtedly mere refugees fleeing the rise of Islamic invaders in the sub-continent. The dynasty of Nānyadeva or of the Solaṅki Rābutta, or the Pālas of the Eight Households in Kathmandu, the Saptakutumbjas of Patan, and the Rāma-vardhanas of Palāúchowk, the 'Vaiśya Thakuris of Nuwākot' who traded with Tibet, were all immigrants who entered Nepal and later controlled its politics, economy and trade between India and Tibet. One such pseudo-Rajput family controlled the trade route to Tibet via Bhaktapur, Sānkhu and Banepā. The last representative of this House of Bhonta was, of course, Jayārjunadeva. He perished in confinement in Kvāṭha-chem, Bhaktapur following the *coup d'état* by his *uprāja*—or subordinate, Jayasthitirajamalla in winter AD 1382. All these rough and finer details of power struggle in the court are, of course, missing as usual from contemporary inscriptions. Take for instance, No 52, dated NS 492, an inscription installed at Mahāpātra Rājaharṣa Bhalloka Malla Varmana of Kelāchem, Kantipur. The caitya was rebuilt a full 13 years after its ravaging and pillage by Samsuddin Illyas in November 1349. The inscription mentions the recent death of King Jayarājadeva in a devastating earthquake. The 13-year-old Jayārjunadeva too is summarily referred to as 'a brave son' of the late King. On the other hand, Jayasthitirājamalla is praised as 'a jewel in the sea of Kṣatriyas' (see lines 8-10). It does not tell us how the court in Nepal was effectively controlled by Jayasthitirājamalla's yesmen.

The inscriptions do not contain helpful details on how the early mediaeval courts were run. The ancient Licchavi *adhikaraṇas* or offices of the Chancery and official titles such as *Sarvadaṇḍanāyaka, Mahābalādyakṣya, Mahāsāmanta, Mahāpratihāra, pratihāra* or *dauvārika,* and *dutaka* are presumably replaced by *Mahātha, Mūrtyaṃga Mahāpātra, Kāyaṣṭha, Upādhyāya, Jyotisha, Amātya,* etc. Nor do we hear about the ubiquitous *chātbhāta* and the powerful *adhikaraṇas.* A palm-leaf grant dated NS 485 does mention *dauvārika* or *asmadpādopajivi, yathā adhikāresya adhikrtit anya,* i.e., other officers in our attendance and other appropriate authorities, though they are not named as such. Most Licchavi inscriptions are directly addressed to the chief or head of a specific village community. This practice, too, appears to have been broken. However, some of the older social institutions at the grassroots level seemed to have survived in the *goṣṭhi* and *pāúcālikā* which implement the grants and deeds as primary caretakers of a votive project. Similarly, the older units of coinage such as *paṇa, kārṣāpaṇa* and *purāṇa* are heard no more. They were displaced by *dramma, palapla, śivakā,* a gold or silver coin (weight gold, 0.9 gms and silver, 0.4 gms) issued by Sivadeva (d. NS 226). Documents from the Rudravarṇa Mahāvihāra testify to the historical evidence of the private ownership of real estate and of transactions 'according to the law of non-recoverability on payment of price' as early as NS 158/AD 1038. Older chronicles wax eloquently on the pious deeds of Anandadeva, who initiated transactions in real estate. Private ownership of land and houses must have been in practice for generations.

Urbanisation of a Peasant Society

The settlements in the Nepal Valley were already dense by the end of the Malla rule, not only in the three 'royal city-states' but also in their 30 or so satellite townships, each with built public space, temples, water-sources, ponds, rest-house and tanks. This process of nucleation of human habitation, so typical of the Newar settlements, was triggered by the early development of fired brick-making technology and intensive land-use, confining house-building to elevated areas surrounded by fertile but well-irrigated farm-land. This helped the growth of townships each with a social and cultural identity of its own. The gradual growth of the urban settlements resulted in 32 *tole*s (ca. from Skt. *tala,* land) in Kathmandu, 24 in Bhaktapur and 22 in Lalitpur.

Some of the *toles* are already mentioned by name. More often than not a Buddhist vihāra or a Hindu temple or temple complex is the social and cultural centre of such a locality. As the present corpus comprise nearly 75 per cent of votive offerings, including paving, roofing, restoration/innovation and daily/periodic illumination of religious buildings they are an invaluable source of information for cultural and social history. The documents from Paśupati, Cāngu, Svayambhū, Indreśvra Mahādeva temple at Panauti, Itumbāhā, Ibābhi, Alkohiti and Nhaikambahi contain priceless information, not only on the given temple/monastic complex, but also on the growth of various cults and iconographies. For example, the Nhaikam bahi document of Jayasthitirājamalla's time helps us to date precisely the rise of the vajrayāna cult of Heruka enshrined in the *koṣṭhapāla*. Itumbahā and Indreśvara inscriptions give us a chronological terminus for dating their masterpieces in woodwork. The Kāṣṭhmaṇḍapa copperplates help us to speculate on the growing influence of the Nātha sects.

Was the Temple Income Shared?

Unlike the ancient counterparts, the inscriptions compiled here are silent on the sources of public revenue collected from land, trade, crafts and manufactured goods exchanged in market such as *bhoga, bhāga, trikara, śulka, hiraṇya, śrāvanikā or maryādāpaṇa*. We do not know, for instance, what ratio of land revenue was collected by the State, one sixth, one fourth or one third. Perhaps the ratio varied from plot to plot, depending on the productivity and fertility of land. As land was leased on a tenure basis, the actual tiller (the *mhae* from *mha-ye* or *mhu-ye*, to dig/*bhāvo*, labourer) kept for family consumption a certain ratio of the harvest, surrendering the rest of the yield to the landlord. The silence is in a way an eloquent testimony of the weak presence of the State or centralised apparatus during this 'Dark Period' of Nepali history. However, the Middle Ages in Nepal do not appear to be any different from those in the rest of South Asia or even Europe because, here, we find feudal lords against other feudal lords in perpetual confrontation so that the landscape was studded with forts or fortifications, cities were walled citadels, so much so that even monasteries were a sort of fort, not infrequently used as *Kvāṭhabahāla*.

Not only was a lord against other neighouring lords, what the petty chieftains could not get by grinding his peasantry or craftsmen they

naturally sought by military adventure. We hear in such profusion in the unexpurgated notes of the *Gopālarājavaṃsāvalī*. When an inscription or two makes an explicit statement on how much should the tenant submit to a temple per given plot of land, it is more of an exception than the rule. For example, take No. 136, an inscription installed in Paśupati courtyard dated NS 591, relating to the installation of an image of Bhairava, a golden flag post, and three golden finials on the temple. Unlike other votive inscriptions where only the size or the location of the donated land are given, here in this inscription sponsored by Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa of Cola Kingdom in south India, 36 *ropanis* of land are listed by size and location, followed by the amount of yield of each plot and their total 21 *pāthis* of paddy to be shared among the following: the *guthiyārs*, 9 *pāthi*, 1 *pāthi* for filling the bowl of Bhairava, 1 *pāthi* for lights, and 10 *pāthis* for the (annual?) *guthi* functions as desired by the Headman. The yield of 14 additional *ropanis* is to be shared between astrologer Harishankar and the rest.

If compared with the current yield of 4 *muris* per *ropani* in the Valley, the ratio of produce for 36 *ropanis* (i.e., 21 *pāthi)* is too low. The State revenue was exceptionally low on charity lands or the tiller's share was too high, or the landlord's share was too low—there is no way to verify here. Compare this document with the Samsāradevī copperplate of NS 567, donating more than 82 *ropanis* for sponsoring various rituals in memory of the late Queen-Mother, or with No 134 dated NS 588, installed at the water-conduit at Tumlāchem tole, Bhaktapur, to erect a gold-gilted image of Nārāyaṇa measuring to the size of the late Prince Jayarājamalladeva, King Yakṣa's son, where nearly 90 *ropanis* of land were donated for various functions such as feeding the yogis, gift of grains to be distributed on festivals to the needy, lighting lamps, feeding the Lord Nārāyaṇa, changing his dress, bathing the image with five nectars, offering flowers and vermilion, and making cash offerings to Brahmins.

Religious Cults, Rituals and Cultural Data

A number of firm dates for monuments, stone and bronze sculptures are based on the inscriptions compiled here. Gautam Vajrācārya and Mary Slusser published their seminal and ground-breaking papers on mediaeval arts and architecture, based by and large on documentary evidence from inscriptions found in Itum Bāhāl, Dattātreya Temple and

Indreśvara Temple. The Sūrya image or the Umā-Maheśvara panels as well as the śālavaújikā/Yakṣī struts are all provided with a chronological frame by the inscriptional records, supplemented by other historical material. Thus, art history in Nepal would have been an esoteric guess-work, at best a speculative exercise, without these inscriptions which often elaborate on the inauguration of a religious foundation.

Evidently, almost all outstanding monuments, rituals and festivities in mediaeval Nepal were funded by the Royalty or elite families, the *bhadraloka/bhāroka/bhāro* with income from land tilled by *bhāravāhaka/bhāvo*. These foundations were supported by the annual harvest *(kuta/varṣānna)*, and they were maintained by entrusted trusts or by local councils of the elders. The economic foundations of this mediaeval society, its religion and culture were, thus, feudal landownership and property relations based on crop shared with the direct cultivators who submitted a nominal part of the yield to the State and the other part to the lord who, in turn, donated it to various charities, religious foundations and cultural activities.

Some of the inscriptions compiled here have shed valuable light on our complex cultural history. Critiquing a recent publication on Buddhist art-history, Gautamvajra Vajrācārya claims that in early monastic practices in Nepal, Kuladatta's *Kriyāsaṃgraham* was in vogue. His manual (ca. 8th-9th century AD) laid out rules and rituals for founding Buddhist vihāras where the tantric deity, Vajrasattva, was installed in the upper storey sanctum. However, later on, the Nepalese began to follow Jaggadala's *Kriyāsamuccaya* written in the 12th century. He prescribed Heruka as the principal deity for an esoteric shrine. Vajrācārya argues that this regime was in practice until the 15th century when the cult of Cakrasamvara took over. There seems to be compelling evidence for this hypothesis in a copperplate from Nhaikambahi, Kathmandu, dated NS 508 (No 59). The document clearly mentions that after constructing a three-storey monastery, an Akṣyobhya Buddha and Yamalaka Heruka (the Heruka couple, i.e., Vajravārhī and Cakrasamvara) were established as the god inside as the *koṣṭhapāla* (New. *kvāpāhdyo*) (see lines 6-8).

Similarly, the rise of śaiva tantra with its own canon of *āgama* and tantra seems to have got fresh inspiration after the arrival of Rudra śiva, the Shaṅkarācārya from the *matha* of Amardaka, during the rule of

śivadeva (d. NS 226). An inscription elaborates on his visit to the temple of Paśupati. He built two new temples with the gifts he received here and initiated the princes, including the future king Anandadeva and prince Yaśomalla. The rise of Shaivism with its new network of *Vidyāpīṭhas/āgamas* must have gained fresh cultural energy in Bhaktapur, a newly founded city in and around śivagala, when the Tripura palace too was built as the royal seat consisting of five courtyards.

Inscriptions as Official Edicts and Private Donation Papers

In a recent publication, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and other Indo-Aryan Languages*, Salomon provides an exhaustive list of 'possible avenues open for a scholar to approach inscriptions'.[5] Among others, these avenues of possibility include political and dynastic history, social, economic and administrative history, the study of religions and cults or rituals, visual arts and performing arts. He also explores the possibilities of studying inscriptions as literary texts, focusing on diction, style and aesthetic value of the texts. All these possibilities can, of course, be explored, but not in any brief 'Introduction', much less in this one. However, one aspect deserves to be mentioned: the use of the Sanskrit language as a medium of epigraphy in early mediaeval Nepal. Sanskrit never was a language of the populace in the Valley where even as recently as the 1950s the literacy rate was as low as 2 per cent. Most of these inscriptions were posted in public places, in water-tanks, temples, monasteries and resting places so that they are seen, if not read, by the public. In ancient times, their execution or communication was the responsibility of an officer named *dutaka* or *dauvārika* who probably explained to the villagers what they contain. His name was invariably given in ancient Licchavi inscriptions. Although the position of village *dvāre* continued till the end of the Rāṇās, he was conspicuously absent in mediaeval inscriptions, with the exception of a single Royal deed in palm-leaf dated NS 485. It must have been the responsibility of an officer like the *dwāre* or *pratihāra* to interpret the contents as well as the intent of inscriptions installed in villages. In the case of the ones posted in temples or monasteries their contents and purport were conveyed by the chief officiate of the place.

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5 Salomon, 1998, pp. 226-250.

So much has already been written in censure on the 'barbarism', 'decline' and 'depravity of Sanskrit as used by Nepali scribes', particularly on their 'wild absence of syntax', their provincial audacity of converting its pristine diction and syntax into 'hybrid pidgin of Newārī', and the promiscuity of its orthography. Much of this censure is not unmerited. A prominent part of it is, of course, due to the linguistic depravity of the ritualists, priests and astrologers who must have drafted them with their loose grip on the Sanskrit composition as well as grammar. But, often, many mistakes are also due to the lapses of illiterate stone-masons or the smiths who inscribed the text on hard stone or metal surface. These lapses alone are not fully convincing evidence of the general decline in culture or learning in contemporary Nepal. We should not regard this alone as sufficient ground for a sweeping condemnation of cultural depravity in mediaeval Nepal. At least, contemporary Tibetan religious histories belie the lamentation for the decline in the knowledge of Sanskrit in Nepal in mediaeval ages. Out of the total 145 inscriptions compiled here, several longer pieces, such as one dated NS 264 now in the National Museum, the ones dated NS 492, NS 502 and NS 591, deserve closer analysis for content as well as diction and style, though some are too pompous and flamboyant for modern literary tastes.

DVV's Interpretative Framework

The mediaeval epigraphy project is doubtlessly the last milestone in DVV's long productive academic career. DVV was a 'nationalist', a committed admirer of the Great King Prithvīnārāyaṇa Shāhā and the centralised Hindu state his successors tried to build out of nearly 50 feudal principalities in this part of the Himalaya. His approach to these inscriptions is based on 'literal interpretation of texts' inspired frequently by an intensive study of a limited number of Indian or Sanskrit classics such as Kalidāśa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* and Kauṭalya's *Arthaśāstra.* As documentation shows, his exposure to modern historiography and familiarity with English or other Western publications was very limited. Following an 'eight-year curriculum of his Gurukula' he shared its strength as well as fatal drawbacks of outlook.

DVV could have done more with this material than he did. A handy index of place-names and personal surnames could easily have been

prepared by DVV or his team from these inscriptions. There are references to *mānadhari* (No 38), *shilpakāra* (No 43), *kasta-nāyaka* (No 21), *joshi, āchārya, mahāpaṇḍita bibhutichandrapāla* (No 41), *bhāvo* (Nos 16 and 23), *pradhānānga pātra* (No 51), *valloka malla varman* (No 52), *mūlami, karmāchārya* (No 52), *yogi* (No 60), *bhikṣu* (No 61), *mahātha bhāro* (No 68), *paramāchārya nāyaka* (No 71), *rājopādhyāya* (No 72), *bhaṭṭa* (No 74), *tambakāra* (No 74), *karmāchārya* (No 78), *suvarṇakāra* (No 79), *rawat* (No 99), *pramāna* (No 107), *paṇḍu* (No 110), *varmā* (No 111), *duwāra* (No 114), *vaidya varmā* (No 118), and *gauḍadeśaāgatad ātriyogi (caitanyanātha)* (No 126). These surnames seem to indicate that much before Sthitirājamalla's social reforms in February 1395 AD there were already social groups specialising in given professions and crafts on a hereditary basis. The King seems to have merely codified their relative ritual status, not their secular role or functions. An inscription dated NS 572 from Lubhu, Patan (No 114), gives some insight into this division of labour in terms of skills required by naming the donors, their family and the priest, the scribe who composed the inscription, the engraver, the image-caster, the designer, the finial-maker, the coppersmith, the goldsmith, carpenters and masons all interlocked in a single ritual ceremony of foundation laying and finial posting in the temple of Nārāyaṇa.

DVV's Nationalism or Literalism?

A close comparison of the transliteration, translation and critical interpretation of some the more well-known mediaeval Nepalese inscriptions as published by earlier scholars, e.g., Indraji, Bendall and Lévi, with DVV's shows that there is a deep 'nationalist' bias in DVV's readings and commentaries, a 'politics of meaning' to use Clifford Greetz's term. The mediaeval society with its emerging urban economy and stratified social order was part and parcel of a system of which the arts, architecture, temples, rituals as well as the religious beliefs were an invariant outgrowth. Any 'interpretation' of one cannot be isolated from the interpretation of other elements of the total social and cultural system. In this great chain of social life, the court, the elites and the temple they worshipped at or built, the whole society participated in as a single socio-economic network of the patron/sponsor, clientele and retinue of specialists, often known in the literature as 'the *jajamāni* system'. Many an inscription compiled here are statements of belief in the status quo, not that of protest nor of disbelief and questioning the

existing distribution of social and economic privileges—something totally unthinkable in these pious scripts. DVV's translations and commentary have something of deep-seated uncritical literalism, born of his training in the Gurukula that so 'valorized the rote memorization of fundamental texts', never hesitating to take every given word in the inscription as granted with scriptural value. That words, i.e., texts, assume meaning only in a context, and contexts are defined by social relations that are ever changing, never seem to emerge from DVV's 'literal' commentaries confined inside the text, rarely if ever looking outside to see what made the texts as they are. To translate the *virudha* or *praśasti* of the ruling king into Nepali is not much of a problem. But to compare it with contemporary formula regionally or to compare the titles assumed by a hilltop baron with that of the contemporary paramount ruler of the realm is to measure their power relations, the substance of their existing political dynamics. Rarely does DVV pause to reflect upon the pompous verbosity of the titles assumed by feudatories, ministers and chieftains of the early mediaeval Nepāla-maṇḍala, where most of the *sāmantas* of the consortium were placed on near-equal footing with a nominal crowned king with whom he was compelled to take a vow before the temple of Paśupati that was to 'last for generations to come' (see inscription No 116 dated NS 573). No wonder that the vow was more often broken than observed for long by the signatories!

Not infrequently, Nepalese inscriptions have been read to suit one's preferences, with readings and meanings ascribed to them in accordance with one's likes, even by inventing wording or phrasing that does not exist in the text. The most palpable one is the reading and translation of Line 14 in the Cāngu nārāyaṇa inscription dated śaka 386, where, along with the words *kulakramāgata rājyam mahat*, is inserted the word *nepāla*—a non-existent one to be translated into Nepali as 'the vast realm of Nepala' by the late Historian-Laureate Baburam Acharya and Nayaraj Pant to support their pet theories. Similarly, the late Yogi Naraharinatha read or misread the wording *devo gorakṣo* in the NS 449 copperplate found in Kaṣṭhamāṇḍapa, Marusattal, in place of *vesakhasukla*, just to prove that the structure was built by a *nātha* medicant and that it now belongs to their community.

Transliterating inscriptions and translating them from one language to another is, thus, not a neutral function of a self-denying philological robot though it may not appear to be as fraught with 'the politics of

meaning' as Clifford Geertz makes it. While reviewing DVV's readings and translations, at places his fulsome and enthusiastic commentary in particular, one should not forget that he had sat at the feet of his Guru sharing the innate dogmas of the moribund *gurukula* for more than three decades as one of the leading 'activists'—a committed senior activist, attacking the infidels right and left. Of the scores of 'little correction pamphlets' issued by the school, several trenchant ones challenging the infidel 'Western-style educated historians' were from his youthful pen desperately on the lookout for some space in social circles. How aggrieved he and his mates were at the public disaffection for their 'epoch-making intellectual revolution' (comparable to the Enlightenment, according to M.R. Pant) is all but transparent from DVV's personal letters recently published. It is difficult to believe that DVV, finally, got over this intellectual camaraderie and 'partisanship' while working on this volume where he invariably converts every *Nepala-Saṃvat* date into the *Vikrama-Saṃvat* as a compulsive act.

Political Semantics and Epigraphic Interpretation

During the last three decades, between 1979-2009, I studied mediaeval Newārī texts, literary, historical and epigraphic, edited/translated some, compiled words from these, coordinated a major lexicon-cum-dictionary project comprising a database of nearly 56,000 older words. Yet, I find some of the documents compiled here read like a jigsaw puzzle. Recently, Sheldon Pollock, a leading Western Sanskritist wrote

> Like every other human practice, making texts and reading texts are activities that are wholly theory-laden: we could neither nor would do these things unless we had some sense of how to do them and why. As with every other practice, however, most of us tend to ignore the conceptual foundations of how we make and read texts. We just seem to do it.[6]

When I started studying the first few early mediaeval Nepalese inscriptions in early 1980s it was not to explore their conceptual foundations. I thought philology or linguistics teaches simply 'how to read well', to put it in Nietzsche's timeless words. I was interested in

6 Pollock, 2006b.

how those texts were made, in their syntactic structures and their lexicon, in their textuality, the formal relations of words, phrases and clauses to one another, I was not interested in why they were made, in their rhetoric or dialectics, much less in their political semantics. After having done some diachronic syntax I found that there was not much in it. The issues of content, meaning and dialectics of these texts, however, seem to be an inexhaustible and perennial field, hardly taken up in recent traditions of study. As I went on reading some of the ancient and mediaeval texts and inscriptions from Nepal, both their making and contemporary investigations seemed to be deeply 'laden with theory'. This was one of the irresistible temptations for me when I was invited to write a critical foreword to the present volume.

Though the late DVV had not made the conceptual foundations of his epigraphic studies clear anywhere in so many words, his Guru and the Gurukula seem to have left few of their dogmas undeclared. To take them as the final words from the horse's mouth, a publication by Panditji clearly outlines these 'objectives and methods' of the Saṃśodhana Maṇḍala school where no matter why a novice came to his class, he was 'trained to amend' factual errors commonplace in popular textbooks of Nepalese history.[7] As a novice, DVV was sent to this school to learn enough Sanskrit, not to pursue epigraphy, much less history, for his family profession of Ayurveda. It must be a miracle of association that even before he completed his eighth year of the prescribed curriculum he, like his fellow classmates, was publishing correction pamphlets! When the first number of such publications came out on September 20, 1952, he was hardly 20. What 'conceptual' or other theoretical foundations he or his inmates had is unknowable at best because 'the list of 100 recommended books' contains none on historiography.

Surely, none of us believes that DVV was infallible ('impeccable' was the fashionable label once used by Mary Slusser for this School, now fallen into disrepute since 1984) in personal as well as academic life, and that all his transliterations, translations and commentaries were, just like everyone else's, flawless. That he himself had second thoughts on his interpretations is more than evident in a note he added later to his interpretation of the word *mamgvara* which occurs in a copperplate dated NS 221 (No 16). On page 23, he says that the word is a proto-form

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7 N.R. Pant, 2002.

of *magar*, standing for *Magarāta*. Later on, in page 57, he adds a note, associating the word with *Mongol* race as well as the place-name, *Maṃgal* in Pāṭan! In his interpretation of the old Newārī word *bhāvo* as a term for the nobility, he was clearly confusing it for *bharo bharoka bhadraloka*. It can be cited as just another instance of poor historical phonology, because *bhāvo* stands for the labourer/peasantry (from Skt. *bhāra-vāhaka)*. He had also left many a gap in checking the published transcriptions of some crucial inscriptions, such as No 49 from Kaṣṭhamāṇḍapa dated NS 454 where he left many a word disjoined from case-suffixes, verb-inflections separate from verb stems, prefixes hanging separate from the noun stems, etc.

Epigraphic Sanskrit and Modern Printing Conventions

Since Sanskrit texts began to appear in print from Europe or British India in the 19th century, a convention of word-break is now taken for granted, for instance, in handling the long compounds. However, in Nepal, even now, standards are yet to evolve for words, their suffixes and inflections in Nepali or Newārī orthography so that transliteration of any connected old Newārī text is problematic at best. Following modern European printing conventions, Nepalese scholars separate words in Sanskrit compounds wherever they are 'capable of separation by the use of the *virāma*'.[8] According to others, on the other hand, compounds are printed together '*except* after word ending in a vowel, *anusvāra* or *visarga*'.[9]

Because of the synchronic use of diverse script-styles overlapping with one another, deciphering Newārī texts is often an exercise in inspired guess work. DVV read inscription No 4 (dated NS 124) thrice, and each time he ended up with a new text! Not included here are some 'controversial pieces' such as the inscriptions on repoussé images published by Alsop or Slusser (who read NS 188 and NS 185 for NS 488 and 485) as the reigning king mentioned in both was Arjunadeva, and there was no such paramount ruler in the Valley with that name whereas Jaya(Arjunadeva) was on the throne in Devapāṭan or Bhaktapur or Banepā, young and novice though he certainly was then.

The limitations of contemporary Nepalese philology as practised by

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8 Monier-Williams, 1864, p. 20.

9 Wikner, 1997, B2.

Nepali scholars like the late D.R. Regmi or Hari Ram Joshi or Mohan Khanal are more than transparent page after page if one compares their transliterations of any noted document. A comparison of the three transliterations with one another of the copperplate (No 109, dated NS 567) compiled here, in Pant's transliteration and Nepali translation, will be most rewarding. Regmi's indefensible transliteration was merely copied and reproduced by Joshi who dated the inscription as NS 560; Regmi dated it as NS 561. Their transliterations are best testimonies of the poverty of their knowledge of the script, the languages and the content of the inscription they published. This is often the result of the unacknowledged work of hired epigraphists who work for 'fixed rates per śloka of 32 aksaras', so generously employed by our reputed historians from the ranks of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Nepal. At the end of a paper published by M.R. Pant on this copperplate in *Pūrṇimā*, Nos 122-126, he gives a glossary for 122 Newārī words used in the inscription. Out of the total words used in the inscription, 62 are proper nouns. The 'problematic' ones are all old Newārī. For instance, one of those words is *dhālarape*, attested in line 17, translated by Pant as 'to offer'. However, the authentic sense of the word is 'to pour some liquid, e.g., on a holy image'.[10] 'To offer' is only a cryptic shorthand expression for so many items.

Interpretation of mediaeval texts is made more risky because of the changing cultural practices and institutions over time. A number of culture-specific items are either unrecognisable or have totally vanished from social memory. One such item was *byān-dalutha*, a flat usually earthen, lampstand shaped like a frog. No wonder, M.R. Pant's Nepali translation converts this into a Moghul style *chirāga*, a high-rise lamp to be carried and offered to Lord Paśupati!

A close and careful comparison of transliteration and translation of major mediaeval Nepalese inscriptions published since the 1880s will show the problems of reading and interpreting them. Except for short and minor votive or commemorative pieces, longer ones in prose or verse dealing with theological or metaphysical concepts or with social or cultural institutions pose complex issues of diachronic semantics. As social structure and cultural contexts keep on changing over time, words and their meaning too remain in a state of constant flux so that what a

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10 See McGregor, 2003.

word or phrase may have meant in a script may not be what a modern lexicon defines it now. Bhagwanlal Indraji's translation of the Inscription No 81 dated NS 533, lines 31-34, may be compared with DVV's which reads as

> May rain fall on time; the earth be blessed with plenty of harvest/grains; may trees bear fruits; let no calamity befall on all people; may the Brahmins continue to recite the Vedas and its six branches/limbs of them. (author's translation)

This may very well be a part of Vedic *ricā* or shaman chanted and sung a millennium ago.

Yet another telling example of changing semantics could be a comparison of the *biruda/praśasti* used for the king or king-makers. When translated the scripts seem to mean something else than the original. Kumbheśvara inscription (No 62 NS 512) printed here with DVV's Nepali version reads like a different document from the English translation by Bendall.[11] A number of longer inscriptions with religious message or political intent are multi-dimensional in levels of meaning, some intended for elite consumption whereas others are addressed to the public or the common man, so evidently layered in different languages—one in the language of Gods, other in the speech of the mortals, the vernacular or *deśa bhāṣā*—the latter cataloguing mostly mundane details of donation or ritual offerings. Access to the message is defined by the medium chosen by the donor.

In inscriptions with a relative clarity of intended meaning, the language continues to remain unambiguously single dimensional or non-metaphoric, diction prosaic and the speech act of each sentence exceptionally perspicuous—to praise the temporal powers that be, the Paramount ruler from Bhaktapur as well as the three Mahāpātras of Lalitpur. The immediate social context is the promise made by the wife of the donor to build a temple to Lord Shiva who passed away prematurely by fainting in bed with high fever before the fulfilment of her promise made to the god. Her husband proceeded to fulfil the promise after she died. We will, of course, never know why it was not done earlier. More is promised for others who come to bathe in this *tīrtha*

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11 Bendall, 1886, p. 61.

on *śrāvaṇa pūrṇimā* or wash his/her face or body and offers oblation to Lord Kumbheśvara will sure go to heaven as the tank/water-conduit directly flows from the feet of Lord Kumbheśvara. The water flowing here is pure and holy. The final clauses are full of assurances for hereafter for those who, like the donor and his family, build temples to Mahādeva or Viṣṇu, or others gods, those who decorate the temples with stone, brick or wood will become 'rich, happy always and finally go to Shivapuri to live happily ever after!'

There is, of course, no problem if the contemporary historian wishes to use this inscription or inscriptions such as this as one of his 'primary sources'. A literal interpretation would easily render social, cultural and political context for its use. However, if one ponders on some of the statements and promises, in particular the explanations for why the temple was constructed after the death of the donor's wife in bed from high fever, 'literalism' alone may not be enough. One has to go not only for the text, but into and beyond it to reach 'the mind of the scribe'—in the hope that he may have revealed some of it.

Conclusion

Every analysis and interpretation of early mediaeval Nepalese inscriptions is fraught with too many challenges. For one thing, most inscriptions are damaged and fragmented, surviving in a poor state of preservation due to wear and tear of time. There is no orthographic consistency, and paleographic dating is not always possible as cursive writing styles vary a great deal from place to place, from writing material to writing material or surface. Most place-names as well as the names of deities in votive texts have vanished over time so that we cannot be sure where *Pannangu*, or *Mamgvara* or *Jiglodgama*, *Paúcāvata*, is, or where *Jhaṃteśvara* or *Temkhubhattaraka* may have been. Although the language may read like Sanskrit, neither its lexicon nor the syntax is according to the known rule-books. Further confounding it, Newārī enters epigraphy with the beginning of the 12th century in the form of isolated expressions for dates, as auxiliary verbs or verbalising suffixes before it was used in earnest, for example, in the copperplates from Kāṣṭhmaṇḍapa in NS 454 or 499. Although there may also be a Sanskrit text preceding it, interpretation of a 13th-century Newārī document is not so easy. This may be why DVV had left a number of them without Nepali translation.

Cecil Bendall published the Kumbheśvara inscription in 1886,[12] with a translation and a facsimile. Many expatriate and native scholars have published ancient and mediaeval inscriptions since the 1880s, with rubbings, facsimiles, translations but few except Lévi have so far cared to study them in their context, probing beyond their verbal surface. In his commentaries on some inscriptions, DVV tries to compensate for this deficiency, particularly in his elaborate commentaries on well-known ancient and mediaeval inscriptions of Nepal, by focusing his critical attention. He devoted himself to their study for over four decades. Whatever limitations there are in his readings are the limitations of his approach, *not* of sanguinity of interest. His commentaries evidently show that it is not enough to know the script or scripts, nor just the grammar or the lexicon of the epigraphy: one has 'to get inside the mind of corpus', as Michael Witzel writes about the philology of Vedic texts.[13] Study of philology is not just a study of words, but of texts as constructs of a civilisation. One has to be able to put it in social and cultural space, in a context.

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12 Bendall, 1886, pp. 83-85.

13 Witzel, 1996.

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VII
The Chronicle Texts

29

Introduction to the Facsimile Edition of the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*

The Manuscript

This is a facsimile edition of the well-known Nepalese chronicle, popularly known among scholars as *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī,* that is the Chronicle of the Gopāla Kings. This title was given to the manuscript presumably because the chronicle begins with the dynasty of the cowherd kings. The manuscript is also—no doubt oddly—known as the Bendall Vamśāvalī, after the name of the scholar who discovered it. The manuscript was discovered by Cecil Bendall in what was then called the Durbar or Bir Library in 1898-99. At present, it is in the collection of the National Archives, Kathmandu (Catalogue No. I: 1583, filmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Reel No. B 18/23.)

The *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* is a palm-leaf manuscript, measuring 28 cm by 5 cm, with leaves numbered continuously, consisting of Folios 17-63, with an extra folio numbered 50, thus 48 folios in all. As the first 16 folios are missing, it is incomplete. The script is *bhujiṃ mola*, or fly-headed—the paleographic successor of an ancient Newari script, with hooked headlines. It is written continuously in a single consistent hand-writing with no change of writing, or interpolation, excent for a single entry in Folio 46b. All folios except 58a have 5 lines in a folio. Folio 58a has 4 lines. The extra folio, which probably comes after Folio 50, has 4 lines in (a) and 1 line and a half in (b). The folios are numbered on the right-hand side with numerals, and on the left-hand side with letter-numerals. A few initial pages are badly moth-eaten, whereas several

others are faint and illegible, the ink having faded through age and use. It is perforated a little to the left of the centre for holding the folios with a string.

In the first half of the manuscript (Folios 17a-30b) the language is a corrupt and ungrammatical form of Sanskrit. In the second half, it is mediaeval Newari, with a very high percentage of Indo-Aryan loan words.

Dated Entries

The earliest date in the manuscript is Nepāla Saṃvat 177 (AD 1057), and the latest one is NS 509 (AD 1389). The first half consists of a very few dated entries; the second half consists of nearly all dated entries. The chronicle contains an account of some 332 years which is dated, and relatively authentic. From about NS 469 (AD 1349) the entries in the chronicle for the next 40 years come in quick succession and in greater detail. However, there is no doubt that earlier sources going as far back as the AD 1050s were used in its compilation. This is evident from the authenticity of the dates and astrological elements in the entries dated as far back as NS 177, verified by the colophon data scrutinised by Petech (1958) and Regmi (1965). Equally important is the negative evidence, as it were. Even where dates are given, the entries in the chronicle are not in a strictly chronological order. The compiler had clearly used several different sources—the sources which were, probably, akin in nature to the 17th-18th century *thyāsaphūs*.

The Time and Place of Compilation

Following the trauma of a prolonged political instability, internal dissension, and the devastating Muslim invasion of AD 1349, Jayasthitirājamalla's reign (AD 1382-1395) may have been a period of relative stability. As the King is eulogised in no uncertain terms as an incarnation of Rāma, Buddha and Lokapāla, all in one as it were, there is hardly any doubt that the compilation was completed during his reign. As a bridegroom brought from outside, and then groomed and inducted into the politics, society and culture of the Nepal Valley, Sthitirājamalla had to understand the country and its past. Above all, he had to establish his own legitimacy to rule over it as an alien prince-consort, enjoying the throne by virtue of being the husband of Princess Rājalladevi—the heiress to the Nepalese throne. What intrigues us,

however, is that there isn't a word in the whole chronicle about Sthitirājamalla's own lineage or social origins.

As a greater part of place-names in the chronicle is from Bhaktapur, it couldn't have been written elsewhere. Probably, the compiler was himself close to the court, an insider of Bhaktapur politics who appears to have personally witnessed the Muslim invasion in November 1349. Because of the preponderance of astrological elements in most of the dated entries, including the *ghaḍi*, *yoga* and *nakṣatra*, the compiler and his sources couldn't have been very far from the profession of the astrologer.

More Well Known than Understood

The manuscript has hitherto remained an intimidating experience for most students of history—a text 'more well-known than understood' (Petech, 1958). Even after 85 years of its discovery not a single reliable transcription is available in print, let alone a critical edition. Despite the fact that 'its edition and translation is at present the foremost desideratum in the field of Nepalese history and possibly also of Newari linguistic studies' (Petech, 1958:7), the task has hitherto remained neglected.

Bendall, the discoverer of the manuscript, had published a historical sketch of Nepal (AD 1000-1600), chiefly 'from MSS lately discovered' (Bendall, 1903). His sketch also contained a facsimile plate of 4 folios of the *vamśāvalī* text. However, he made no secret of the fact that the manuscript presented difficulties:

> The language is no doubt intended for Sanskrit, but in obscurity and a perfectly wild absence of syntax it rivals the worst colophons of Nepalese MSS that I have seen.[1]

Bendall divided the manuscript into three parts, designating them as V1, V2 and V3.

V1 (Folio 17-30a) is in the form of annals or king-lists, in the 'form of brief annals of the successive reigns not unlike the other *vamśāvalīs*, but giving a much greater number of dates, in addition to the length of the reigns. The leading events of each reign are also noticed in some cases with dates, at first in words and later on in numerals'. This part of the

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1 Bendall, 1901, p. 3.

manuscript ends with NS 503, with the crowning of Jayasthitirājamalla. The language is a corrupt form of Sanskrit.

V2 (Folio 30b-36a) 'is a document of different origin; it is a list of births of royal and other distinguished personages. The language is unfortunately old Newari'.

V3 (Folio 36b-63b) 'is perhaps merely a continuation of V2. I have called it a separate document, because a slight break with double *daṇdas* occurs...at the end of 36a, and because at this point there is a marked difference of style. The string of short paragraphs each recording little more than a birth, is abandoned, and the annals become more expanded. The previous section had ended...with NS 396. This, however, begins with NS 379, and the history would not seem to be treated on a strictly chronological basis'.[2]

Bendall's divisions and designations of the manuscript have been, so far, accepted as a matter of convention by Lévi (1905-8), Petech (1958), and Regmi (1965). However, there is no break, orthographic, stylistic or thematic, between Folios 36a and 36b. So we consider that the manuscript consists of two loosely related texts: *Vamśāvalī1* and *Vamśāvalī2*.

At the turn of the century, Bendall lamented that V2 is 'unfortunately in old Newari', and that it presented difficulties of the language 'for which I can get no adequate help in Nepal or in Europe'.[3] More or less, in a similar vein Petech wrote in 1958:

> The manuscripts (V2 and V3) offer almost insuperable difficulties to our understanding. The old Newari in which they are written is practically incomprehensible nowadays. The language has changed enormously, the linguistic tradition is lost and even Nepalese Pandits are at loss for interpreting this text.[4]

What Petech felt may have been true in the early 1950s. However, today it sounds something of a hyperbole. The fundamental problem with the text is orthographic rather than linguistic. The division of each entry in V2 into verifiable words, phrases, and clauses is the real problem. As the writing is without spaces, where to make a cut is the problem.

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2 Bendall, 1903, pp. 3-4.
3 Bendall, 1903, p. 4.
4 Petech, 1958, p. 7.

Passages which are relentlessly obscure at this stage of our study are far and few between.

Earlier Editions

Petech published a Romanised transcription of Folios 22b-29a.[5] He made a copious but judicious use of the manuscript in his history of Mediaeval Nepal. However, his prefatory remarks are memorably desperate:

> It is nearly hopeless to prepare an edition of Bendall *vamśāvalī* from a single manuscript, and that illegible in several points and with a text so corrupted that often its interpretation is a matter of guess and nothing more. As to the Newari portions (ending portion of V1, the whole of V2 and V3), this is a task which must be left to Newari scholars.[6]

Among Nepalese scholars, Yogi Naraharinātha had published a Devanāgari transcription prepared by the pundits of the National Archives, Kathmandu. This also includes a brief introduction and a free Nepali translation of the Sanskrit portion of the manuscript.[7]

Regmi published a Devanāgari transcription, claiming that the Yogi's reading had 'several mistakes in the reading of the letter of the MS'.[8] However, Regmi's is the least reliable of the transcriptions available in print.

This facsimile edition is prepared from the National Archives microfilm. Dhanavajra Vajrācārya had prepared a Devanāgarī transcription based on the original manuscript. He had also used the Kaisher Library glass negatives of the manuscript, apparently photographed at the turn of the century when the manuscript was in a better condition. Although he had been using the transcription since 1959, it was not available in print. The Nepali translation as well as the Devanāgarī transcription published here was a part of the History Project for Fiscal Year 1980-81 which Vajrācārya submitted to the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies.

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5 Petech, 1958, pp. 219-224.
6 Petech, 1958, p. 219.
7 Yogi Naraharinātha, 1959.
8 Regmi, 1966, footnote, p. 112.

The Chronicle: A Link between Ancient and Mediaeval Nepal

In Nepalese history there is a big hiatus between the fizzling out of the Licchavis (ca. 8th-9th century AD) and the rise of the Mallas at the beginning of the 13th century AD. This gap is tantalising because of relative scarcity of materials, particularly inscriptions and coinage—so much so that much of the history of this period is merely a string of dates and names ('phantoms' as Lévi puts it), culled from manuscript colophons. In the midst of this Dark Age of Nepal's mediaeval history, this chronicle is nearly like an unfailing lighthouse. Between the Licchavis and the Mallas, there are far too many missing links, and this chronicle is one of the major sources of historical and cultural data which deserve to be assessed. As the chronicle appears to have made use of sources and traditions which were already well-established by the mid-eleventh century AD, its importance cannot be overemphasised.

The Vamśāvalī 1 and Ancient Nepal

The V1 and V2 are only loosely related. The V1 begins from the end of the Kali Yuga when the Nepal Valley was a dense forest, and ends with NS 503. The earliest dated entry in this part of the chronicle is NS 200. In the V1, the only dated entries prior to the Muslim invasion of NS 470 are: NS 207, NS 239, NS 267, NS 219, NS 375, NS 408, NS 409, NS 411, NS 414, NS 417, NS 446, NS 448, NS 467 and NS 468, spanning a period of 270 years. There are only five dated entries between NS 469 and NS 503.

In the V2, on the other hand, there are two dated entries of the second century of the Nepāla Saṃvat, 17 dated entries of the third century of NS, and more than 60 entries which are dated in the 300s of NS. Beginning from Folio 40a, nearly 140 dated entries in V2 belong to the 400s of NS. Beginning from Folio 59a, 35 entries are dated between NS 500 and NS 509, Caitra śukla Dvādaśī. The relationship of the V1 and V2, on the one hand, and of both with cognate texts, on the other, will be discussed later on in this introduction.

The V1, like its cognates, but unlike the V2, summarises Nepal's ancient history (Folio 17a-24a). The overlap between the V1 and the V2 begins from Folio 24a, with the rule of śivadeva or Siṃhadeva (NS 219-246/AD 1099-1126). This is most significant, particularly because śivadeva was undoubtedly an outstanding king—the king who introduced a new coinage, built many secular and religious structures, including a four-storeyed royal palace with five courtyards. The V2

begins by eulogising him as an incarnation of Kāmarūpa Bhairava! So, Siṃhadeva may well be considered a landmark in Nepal's traditional historiography, a meaningful point of intersection between V1 and V2.

The V1 records the traditions about Nepal's ancient history which seem to have crystallised by the end of the first millennium AD. The V1 begins with the end of the Kali Yuga. It narrates the legend of the discovery or emergence of the Luminous Phallus of Paśupatinātha and the founding of the dynasty of eight cowherd kings followed by the dynasty of three buffalo-herd kings. Though the Gopālas or Abhīras may not belong to such hoary past as the vamśāvalī-tradition in Nepal pictures, their historicity is unquestionable. The wide movements of the Abhīra clans have been traced back in India to 1st century BC/AD, with epigraphic records dating from the 2nd century AD. The ascendancy of the Abhīra clan in Nepalese history in AD 512-642, supplying some of the most distinguished names (such as Ravi Gupta, Bhauma Gupta, Jiṣṇu Gupta and Viṣṇu Gupta) lends support to the *vamśāvalī*-tradition with regard to Abhīra rule in Nepal. The later chronicles locate them in the Mātātīrtha belt. The present concentration of the Gvā(lā) and Nanda Gopāla Sreṣṭhas in ancient settlements such as Mātātīrtha, Thānkot, Tistung-Citlāng, Balambū, Sunākothi and Pharping suggests their widespread dispersal and movement in the south and south-west of the valley at one time. The chronicle brings them in, not only before the Licchavis, but also ahead of the Kirātas—a tradition which, in the light of both ethnographic and epigraphic data, is nothing if not dubious.

According to the V1, the Kirātas ruled over Nepal for 32 generations after defeating the cowherd and buffalo-herd kings, totaling for a period of 1701 years! This protracted duration of the Kirāta rule apart, a few things are worth noting in the tradition. As most names are non-Sanskrit in the list it is highly unlikely that they were invented for the sake of filling in the gap in any fanciful chronology in a text 'intended to be Sanskrit'. Secondly, unlike the later chronicles, there is no legendary fact or digressions in the Kirāta king-list of V1. Thirdly, the chronicler unequivocally mentions that the Kirātas now live in the land between the rivers Tamakosi and Aruna. At present, this is the habitat of the Rais and the Limbus—the two ethnic groups which call themselves 'Kirātas' and their land 'Kirāt'. The traditions regarding their banishment are persistent. For example, Hodgson noted in the mid-nineteenth century:

> We know not when the Kirantis were expelled from the plains of India; if indeed they ever held permanent possession there. But it was the Malla dynasty of Nepal proper which, about the middle of the fourteenth century, expelled them from the great valley.[9]

The Kirāta occupation of the Nepal Valley is certainly not an afterthought of the chronicler. The Sanskrit inscriptions in the high style of the imperial Guptas set up in the Valley by the Licchavis (AD 464-879) contain well over 80 per cent non-Sanskrit place-names, including names of rivers, hillocks, canals and tax-offices. There is very little doubt that these nominal come from Tibeto-Burman languages.[10] In default of other data, the linguistic evidence substantiates the chronicler's assignment of a long Kirāta rule over the valley. After narrating the origins of the Solar Line and listing the Sun-Kings up to Vikukṣi, the V1 notes

> Then with the might of the Solar Line, the Licchavi dynasty ruled in Nepal by defeating the Kirāta kings. (Folio 19b, lines 2-3)

Licchavi was the eponymic founder/ancestor of the dynasty who, according to Jayadeva II's Paśupati inscription (AD 733), was the ninth king to rule after Daśaratha. However, according to the V1, the line of descent seems to be, at best, ambiguous. The descendants of Daśaratha ruled in Ayodhyā; the descendants of Viśāla, born in the Ikṣvāku line, ruled in Vimalanagari (Vaiśāli?). The relationship of his last descendant, Vikukṣi, with Licchavi 'remains hanging in emptiness'. As Lévi puts it

> The winding is fairly complicated and the stages obscure enough to awaken distrust; an authentic filiations would have better marked its direction.[11]

It is interesting to note that the first historical dynasty of Nepal seeks its legitimacy in the Solar myth—a convenient source for most of the South Asian monarchies. In history, as against myth, the Licchavis were a famous republican clan, belonging to the Vṛji confederacy, consisting of the śakyas, the Koliyas, the Mauriyas and the Mallas, among others.

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9 Hodgson, 1880, p. 397.
10 Malla, 1981 and 1983a.
11 Lévi, 1905, II, p. 89.

After the expansion of Magadhan monarchy, the confederacy collapsed, and the land of the Licchavis was absorbed into the expanding empire. The rise of Candragupta (AD 319-335) is ascribed by historians to his marriage of convenience with the Licchavi Princess Kumāradevī. Samudragupta (AD 336-375) proudly displays his descent from the Licchavis through his mother.

The nature of the relationship between Nepalese Licchavi and the Licchavis of India is problematic. It is almost impossible to verify whether the Nepalese Licchavis were the direct descendants of the Licchavi clan of the Buddhist period or a survival of the mere name. If they were related, they may have migrated in small numbers to the Nepal Valley in the early centuries BC/AD. However, what is almost certain is that the early Nepalese Licchavis were the feudatories of the Imperial Guptas, at least up to the rule of Samudragupta. His inscription at Allahabad proudly lists the king of Nepal (Vṛṣadeva?) among the five frontier-kings 'who came to pay obeisance and prostrate before the Emperor at his command'. As soon as the Gupta Empire began to decline, the Licchavis in Nepal consolidated their hold and broke away from the Guptas. Jayadeva I may have been the founder of the Nepalese scion of the Licchavis, whereas Mānadeva could very well be the first important Licchavi ruler of Nepal. Although Mānadeva ruled for 41 years (AD 464-505), there is not a single charter or administrative inscription issued by him. We do not know where Mānadeva ruled from. His court or seat of government from where he set out on his campaign against the refractory feudatories of the east and of the west, is so far an unknown point of reference in Nepal's ancient political history.

Unlike the later chronicles, the V1 is the only one which specifically mentions the Licchavis by name. Whenever there is a change of dynasty, *vaṃśāntara*, the chronicler is very particular to note it. For instance,

> King Bhīmadeva (ruled for) 14 years. Then the dynasty of the Gopālas defeated the Solar Line (i.e., the Licchavis) and ruled over Nepal. (Folio 21b, lines 4-5)
>
> These were the three Gopāla kings to rule. (Folio 21a, line 5)
>
> Once again, with the might of the Solar line, the kings of the Dynasty of the Licchavis ruled. King Sivadeva (ruled for) 41 years.

Sivadeva's nephew (sister's son), King śrī Aṃśuvarmā (ruled for) 43 years.

These kings belonged to a different dynasty...

Thereafter the Solar kings ruled over Nepal again. King śṛī Dhruvavarmā 108. (Folios 22a-22b)

The V1 consists of a list of kings, their regnal years, together with some details of events concerning the religious history, mainly pious foundations and gifts to temples such as Paśupatināṭha. The cultural data, in some instances (such as the founding of the Viṣṇu images by Viṣṇugupta), are corroborated by contemporary inscriptions. But, by and large, the political history of the first millennium AD contained in the V1—when verified against contemporary epigraphy—has proved unreliable, if not outright unilluminating. As Lévi puts it, 'the dynastic lists for this period embarrass the critics rather than aid them'. This is so for several obvious reasons. In the first place, the regnal years are inflated in most instances, if not patently wrong. Secondly, the order of kings is mistaken: Mānadeva is placed before Saṅkaradeva, his grand-father. Mānadeva is noted as Vṛṣadeva's son (his great-grand-father). Contemporary rulers are listed as successive ones. The Abīira Gupta rulers who were the feudatories and contemporaries of the Licchavis, are listed before the Licchavi kings. Sivadeva I is repeated twice whereas Jayadeva II is omitted from the V1. The regnal years are impossibly long, exaggerated and imprecise. Consequently, as far as ancient history of Nepal is concerned, the V1 does 'embarrass the critics rather than aid them'. Despite these glaring shortcomings, the V1 and its cognates are our only source of information for the period between the receding of the Licchavis in the AD 750s and the 10th century AD when colophons (earliest dated NS 40) and inscriptions (earliest dated NS 107) begin to be available. For the political history of some 250 years, we have nothing to fall back upon except the V1 and its cognates—as unsatisfactory as they are.

The Nature of the Vamśāvalī Tradition

The preoccupation with genealogy has deep roots in Nepal. Since the dawn of her recorded history it has been a pronounced culture-trait among the ruling elites of Nepal. The earliest dated inscription of the

Licchavis (AD 464) gives a brief genealogy of Mānadeva going back to his great-grandfather Vṛṣadeva. Similarly, Jayadeva II's Paśupati inscription (AD 733) gives a pompous genealogy of the Licchavis, linking himself with the Solar Line on the one hand and the leading ruling families in contemporary India, on the other. The later Malla kings, following Jayasthitirājamalla, give their genealogies, linking themselves (through Rājalladevī or Yakṣa Malla) with the Karnāṭa dynasty of Nānyadeva or with the dynasty of Raghu!

'Nepal is the only country which possesses (the *vamśāvalī* texts) in such an abundance', notes a scholar who found the proliferation of these texts puzzling.[12] At the turn of the century, Lévi sought to classify the literature into two distinct orientations: Buddhistic and Brahminical.[13] The Buddhist chronicles were composed by Vajrācāryas or Sakyas; the Brahminical ones were the output of Brahmins. A Buddhist chronicle, translated into English by Shiva Shankar Singh and Guṇānanda, was edited and published by Wright (1877). A Brahminical chronicle, written in 1834 by Siddhi Nārayaṇa Sharmā of Devapātan, was used by Lévi. As we shall see, this classification of the *vamśāvalī* texts is not particularly relevant for the older group of chronicles. More recently, Petech (1958) has divided the *vamśāvalī* literature into two broad groups:

a. the ancient *vamśāvalīs*, compiled during the late 14th century AD consisting of the 'Bendall *Vamśāvalī*' and 'Kaisher Fragment of a *Vamśāvalī*' (VB and VK, in Petech's abbreviations)
b. the modern *vamśāvalīs*, compiled during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Among the ancient *vamśāvalīs*, the Kaisher Fragment of a *vamśāvalī* is a 8-folio fragmentary and incomplete manuscript Petech discovered in the private library of the late Field Marshal Kaisher Shumsher (Catalogue No. 171). The manuscript itself is a modern one, 8.50 cm x 18 cm in size, written in ordinary yellow Nepalese paper in late Newari script. It is damaged on the left-hand corner. The earliest dated entry is NS 299 (AD 1179). The last dated entry in the main text is NS 469, preceding the invasion of Samas Ud-din. The marginal notes and later entries, however,

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12 Hasrat, 1970, p. xv.
13 Lévi, 1905, pp. 193-201.

range from NS 859 to the events relating to the time of Pratāp Simha Shāha (AD 1775-1777). Petech thought that

> (this manuscript) was the basis of the information collected in 1793 by Kirkpatrick (1911), hitherto believed to be lost. The identity of name and regnal years with Kirkpatrick's list is absolute.[14]

The text of the manuscript was edited and published in roman transliteration by Petech.[15] Like the V1 it is also in a corrupt form of Sanskrit. But, as Brinkhaus (1983) has recently shown, the identity of names and regnal years with Kirkpatrick is much less than 'absolute'.

Recently, Dhanavajra Vajrācārya had discovered a 6-folio folded *vamśāvalī* manuscript in Gorkhā. The manuscript—now in Vajrācārya's private collection—is written in a corrupt form of Sanskrit. Vajrācārya, who published the text as well as its Nepali translation in 1977, places the text with the Kaisher fragment and calls it *Samksipta Gopālarājavmśāvalī* (VG). Like the V1, it begins with the end of the Kali Yuga. The earliest dated entry in VG is NS 267 (AD 1147); the latest one is Vikrama Era 1847 (AD 1790). Vajrācārya believes that the tradition of compiling *vamśāvalīs* had continued since Jayasthitirājamalla's time and that this tradition was also cultivated in Gorkha. Brinkhaus, however, questions the existence of a separate tradition in Gorkhā. By comparing the VK and the VG, he comes to conclude very convincingly:

> VG appear to me to be an abridged copy of VK. The VG corresponds almost completely with the preserved fragment of the VK; for this reason, we can also view it as documentary evidence for those sections of the VK which have not yet been located.[16]

Unlike the ancient ones, the modern *vamśāvalīs* are written in Nepali. Well-off families in Kathmandu possess copies of these modern vamśāvalīs. For well over a century, this was an unfailing source of exposure to Nepali history for an average enlightened Nepali. The proliferation of the modern *vamśāvalīs* in numerous private collections

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14 Petech, 1958, pp. 7-8.
15 Petech, 1958, pp. 213-217.
16 Brinkhaus, 1983, pp. 201-202.

strikes a sharp contrast with the monotonous uniformity in the variations and recensions of the prototypes. For nearly half a century their copies seems to have been in constant circulation followed by continuous recensions and adaptations. The earliest one appears to be by Padmagiri (ca. 1825) or by Siddhi Nārāyan Sharmā (AD 1834). The latest is as late as ca. 1891. The Hodgson Collection in the India Office Library, London is 'the storehouse of variegated vamśāvalī literature--the largest single collection in the world'.[17] Hasrat has published a translation of the recension by Padmagiri, which might as well be the earliest extant vernacular *vamśāvalī*.

Bhagawanlal Indraji, Bendall, Lévi, and Petech had examined and evaluated the traditions preserved in the modern chronicles. They have found that the later chronicles are 'far less correct and trustworthy' and that 'the tradition is corrupted and distorted' at many points representing 'a complete divorce from reality'.[18] For one thing, almost all of the later chronicles wax eloquent on the puranic materials. According to a commentator, the *Vamśāvalī* edited by Paudyāl (1963) and Lamsāl (1966) comprises mythological and semi-historical details of great interest. It is a curious mixture of legend, fiction, and data based on religious tradition; and written in a non-descript rambling style, deals with subjects like the creation of the universe, the appearance of Paśupatinātha and Guhyeśvarī in Nepal, the account of 64 *lingams* and 232 *upalingams*.[19]

The rambling style and loose structure of the later *vamśāvalīs* contrast sharply with the telegraphic style and controlled pace and poise of the mediaeval *vamśāvalīs*. Their addiction to the graphic essentials of the genealogical-historical narrative structure is exemplary. Even where they are elaborate, they are succinct and to the point. Whereas the later chronicles mix all the three constituents of the *itihāsa-purāṇa*-tradition, i.e., myth, genealogy and historical narrative, the early chronicles (V1 and VG) make hardly any use of the mythological elements. The only exceptions are, presumably, the origins of the Paśupatināha phallus and the list of the Sun-kings. Thus, when we talk about the relationship between the *purāṇas* and the *vamśāvalīs* it is the later chronicles which

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17 Hasrat, 1970, p. xvi.
18 Petech, 1958, p. 9.
19 Hasrat, 1970, p. xviii.

we must have in mind. They, of course, draw profusely from the puranic texts such as the *Paśupati Purāṇa, Nepāla Mahātmya, Himavat Khaṇḍa, Svayambhū Purāṇa* and other local legends and traditions. This is probably natural because nearly all these local puranic texts were compiled during the 15th-16th centuries AD, i.e., later than the early group of *vamśāvalīs,* but earlier than the later ones. But once these *purāṇas* were in circulation, their cultural diffusion was merely a matter of time. The cultural elites who compiled them may well have belonged to the same strata of society as the authors of the later chronicles, i.e., the priests of the Hindu-Buddhist faiths.

Although the tradition preserved in the later chronicles is 'corrupted and distorted', although they are padded with legendary materials and mythological interpolations, the later chronicles have preserved the traditions which cannot be dismissed summarily. For one thing, they have preserved a substantial range of social, cultural and political data whose source should be traced and reconstructed. To give just one telling example, the later chronicles such as *Nepāladeśako Itihāsa Saṃgraham* contains entries as late as AD 1890. But in its treatment of ancient Nepal, it contains numerous passages which are not only parallel to the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* (V1), but which contain more elaborate details. In fact, several passages read like explanations of the obscure and cryptic Sanskrit entries in V1. This raises the most tantalising question as to the source and reliability of most of the cultural and historical information contained exclusively in the later chronicles, the information which may have been pruned through centuries of editing—a process which is in clear evidence once V1, VK and VG are compared. Not everything in the later chronicles—unavailable in the earlier ones—is a made-up legend. There is every likelihood that the compilers of later/modern chronicles had an access to versions of ancient chronicles—far more elaborate than the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī.*

One of the fundamental tasks ahead before the students of traditional Nepalese historiography is to reconstruct the tradition of which the mediaeval and modern vamśāvalīs are mere adapted, edited, pruned, enlarged and updated recensions at different phases of Nepal's cultural and political history. For, as the first scholar to study this literature puts it,

> A comparison of its contents with the results gained from the inscriptions will show how very closely the two resemble each other, especially in

the earlier portion. It is, therefore, evident that the author of the vamśāvalī must have had historical documents to go on.[20]

Thyāsaphūs: The Link in the Continuity of the Tradition

Thyāsaphū in Newari literally means 'folded book'. In such a book, the folios are attached in a manner that the reader passes on from one leaf to another without turning over the folio. They are primarily diaries maintained by the scribes who are close to the court, dealing with the events in the courts and the capitals of the divided kingdoms of the Nepal Valley during the 16th-18th centuries. They also include religious events, social celebrations, superstitious noting, and, of course, births, deaths and other rites de passage of the members of the royalty and the nobility.

Since Yogi Naraharinātha located the *Thyāsaphū* A with Candramān Jośi of Thimi in 1954, some scholars had begun to use this valuable source material in their research. Now, about a dozen of these have been published by various Nepali scholars.[21] On closer examination of these published materials, it becomes evident that the distinction between the mediaeval *vamśāvalīs* and the later mediaeval *thyāsaphūs* is merely a matter of convenience and terminology. Between the V2 (later part of the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī*) and the 17th-18th century *thyāsaphūs*, there is hardly any distinction which is either stylistic or thematic.

They are made of similar material. Being more recent, the *thyāsaphūs* are more elaborate, with entries following each other, year by year, month by month, or even day by day. The chronicles as well as the *thyāsaphūs* deal with the life and society of 'the status groups'—the royalty, the nobility and the priesthood. The events are either political or socio-cultural in nature. The focus is the town, the court and the temple. The periphery intrudes only as the theatre of action of the privileged—either to contend or to confirm their rights and legitimacy.

What has already begun to infiltrate the *thyāsaphū*-literature might be called the mythical-puranic elements in the making. More of popular beliefs and superstitions started creeping into the *thyāsaphūs* than in the early group of vamśāvalīs. This is clearly evident in *Thyāsaphū* A.[22]

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20 Bhagawanlal Indraji, 1885, p. 51.
21 Regmi, 1966, III, IV; Gautam Vajrācārya, 1967; Rājavamśī, 1965.
22 Regmi, 1966, III, Appendix 5, pp. 1-46.

Blood is seen coming out at one or other spot from the images of Paśupatināṭha, Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa, Jayavāgeśvarī and Vāśukī (Folios 8, 44, 58, 60). Spots of blood were traced in the shrine of Taleju (Folio 42). Triśūla at Paśupati suddenly emits spiral of fire (Folio 23). A strange voice is heard from inside the shrine of Cāṅgu (Folio 59), and so on. These forebodings invariably signal death, disaster, and other mishappenings. This is already a very fertile ground for the intrusion of the mythical in the historical narrative. At places, the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* betrays a strain which is similar to this. For example, Bhāskaradeva becomes blind due to his ignoble deed of destroying the golden image of Māneśvari (Folio 23b line 4). The Lord of Talamande (Taumadhi?) shed tears and perspired. Four months later, there was a heavy snowfall or hailstorm—the hailstones as big as orange. There was drought and famine. One-fourth of the population perished as a consequence (Folio 44a lines 4-5). But the chronicler of the V1 is also a stark realist. One of the most apocalyptic moments in the whole text is the entry narrating the Muslim invasion of NS 470 which reduces the image of Paśupati to three pieces. In the narrative, this comes immediately after many a rich donation by the royalty and the ruling nobility (Folio 28b lines 3-5) at the shrine of Paśupatināṭha!

At any rate, the distinction between the vamśāvalī and the *thyāsaphū* appears to be merely a terminological one. The *vamśāvalī*-tradition has continued uninterrupted in the Newari language till very late in the 18th century. All the *thyāsaphūs* so far discovered and located are in the Newari language. Thus, for nearly eight centuries the Newars seem to have kept up the *vamśāvalī*-tradition. The compilers of the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī,* too, appear to have had access to sources similar to the later *thyāsaphūs*. Similarly, the compilers of the modern *vamśāvalīs*, too, appear to have had an access to materials akin to the 17th-18th century *thyāsaphūs*, particularly in their recensions of the later Malla period. The *thyāsaphūs* are, on the whole, ambiguous cultural outgrowth; the vamśāvalīs are, on the other hand, 'tendentious'. This is where editing, pruning 'telescoping', and interpolations come, about which we shall discuss soon. Although, more often than not, the vernacular chronicles distorted and corrupted the tradition in the process of modern recensions, the later *vamśāvalīs* undoubtedly had access to the older chronicles such as the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī.*

Tendentiousness and Telescoping

The classification of the Nepalese *vamśāvalīs* into the Buddhistic and the Brahmanical, as we have seen earlier, seems to be more valid for the modern *vamśāvalīs* than for the mediaeval ones. The sectarian orientation is clearly verifiable in regard to their interpretation of the legend of the draining of the primordial Lake of the Serpents (i.e., the Nepal Valley). In Hindu versions, it is Kṛṣṇa who serves as the divine agent; in Buddhist versions, it is Bodhisattva Maújuśrī. In Brahmanical versions, the early settlers were the cowherds who came in the train of Kṛṣṇa; in Buddhist versions, it is the colonisers from Mahāchina brought in by the Bodhisattva. In the Hindu version, the primordial place of worship is the shrine of Paśupati and its Luminous Phallus; in Buddhist version, it is the Svayambhū caitya which enshrines the Bejewelled Lotus with a Thousand Petals.

In striking contrast to these somewhat self-conscious orientations of the later chronicles, the *Gopālarājavṃsāalī* (V1) opens with a sober statement: at the end of the Kali Yuga, the valley was covered with a dense forest (Folio 17a). It doesn't narrate the commonplace tale of the draining of the Lake of the Serpents. The discovery of the Flaming Phallus of Paśupati is also mentioned with no embellishments. Among the rulers of the Licchavi period, the entries on Vīṣadeva, Mānadeva, Aṃśuvarmā, Viṣṇugupta and Narendradeva stand out in relief and contrast by being more elaborate. But the chronicle doesn't make any difference between its references to Hindu and Buddhist foundations, between Vaiṣṇava and śākta gifts by the royalty. This doesn't, however, mean that the chronicler is indifferent to what has been called 'telescoping' by students of Indian historiography:

> The genealogical section (as against the mythological section—KPM) is continually 'telescoped' in order to make its preservation more manageable. This telescoping inevitably results in the pruning of the record, where often bare bones of names and relationship are left: these being regarded as the most significant to social needs.[23]

What the chronicler regarded as 'the most significant to social needs', in our case, doesn't appear to the 'tendentious' as such. For example,

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23 Thapar, 1978, p. 280.

the V1 begins with an account of the miraculous origins of Paśupati (Folio 17a); but it ends with a long, though somewhat cryptic, passage on the foundation of Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa. Jayasthitirājamalla is eulogised, not only as an incarnation of Rāma, but also as an incarnation of the Buddha and a Lokapāla (29a, 30a). At the beginning of V2 (31a), Sivadeva or Siṃhadeva is described as an incarnation of Kāmarūpa Bhairava. Where the chronicle may seem to 'distort' the history of the period is in its 'Bhaktapur-centric outlook'. According to Petech

> The fact tends to present a distorted picture, were it not for the colophons, which give the necessary shifting of emphasis by consistently ignoring the Bhatgaon line and recognizing only the legitimate Patan kings.[24]

But this outlook focused on the town is a characteristic of the mediaeval society and culture as a whole. More specifically, it is reflected in nearly every one of the extant *thyāsaphūs* which focus on one or the other of the three city-states of the valley. As for legitimacy, since the founding of the Tripura Palace in Bhaktapur during Anandadeva's rule (AD 1147-1167), it is difficult to say which was the centre of political power—Patan, Devapātan or Bhaktapur. According to VG and VK, nearly a century earlier, Jayadeva (ca. 1041-1061) had already begun to rule 'half the kingdom', with his capital in Lalitpur. Thus, already in the 11-12th century AD, the ancient Licchavi capital—no matter whether it was in Harigaun or Devapātan—was no longer the sole uncontested centre of power. By AD 1255, Devapātan was reduced to a ritual capital used only for the coronation of the new king. Intermittent external attacks, internal dissensions, pillage and earthquakes had probably already reduced these older establishments to marginally habitable ramshackle. The final stroke may have been the devastating earthquake of Monday, 7 June, 1255, when one third of the population perished and six days later the King Abhayamalla himself died. A century later, in AD 1344, King Arimalla died in Devapātan in a violent earthquake, leaving the Nepalese throne vacant for three years.

Among others, two major examples may be cited from V1 as evidence of 'pruning'. The chronicler gives 'bare bones of names and relationships' for less important kings. But he preserves for posterity

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24 Petech, 1958, p. 7.

substantially elaborate passages on two most important mediaeval kings of Nepal: Sivadeva (AD 1099-1126) and his son Anandadeva (AD 1147-1167). The chronicler has preserved what he considers 'most significant to social needs'. Sivadeva's constructive works in general and his coinage reform in particular are mentioned in the chronicle with a great deal of prominence (Folio 24a-b). His birth is the point of departure for V2 (Folio 30b line 5). Until the recent discovery of gold *sivakā* and silver *dramma*, this piece of information provided by the chronicle had remained unverified. The veracity of this information has been proved beyond a shade of doubt.[25] The information provided about Anandadeva has recently been examined by Kolver (1983) by scrutiniszing the economic data contained in the palm-leaf land-grant documents of the early centuries of the Nepāla Saṃvat. According to this chronicle (Folio 25a lines 2-3), Anandadeva was the king who for the first time permitted his citizens to buy and sell houses and fields. Private ownership of real estate becomes transferable during his reign. In this part of the world all land belonged to the King. This would, ordinarily, prevent valid sales. According to Kolver,

> there apparently was a substantial change in the modes of possessing land which does bear a certain similarity to what the chronicles claim to have happened under Anandadeva.[26]

On studying the contemporary documents, it was found that it was not the sales and purchases of houses and fields which Anandadeva first allowed his subjects: it was the right to enjoy the use of real estate *(paribhoga)* which was made transferable. This shows the importance of many a piece of social, economic and cultural data preserved almost solely in this chronicle alone—data which deserve to be analysed and assessed.

The V2: An Unexpurgated Political History of Mediaeval Nepal

One of the most fascinating aspects of the V2 is that it can be read as an unexpurgated first-hand running commentary on the mediaeval feudal order, observed fresh and live. Here is the picture of a weak monarchy,

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25 See Rhodes and Valdettaro, 1976, pp. 158-166; Kolver, 1983.
26 Kolver, 1983, p. 150.

surrounded by the turbulent nobility which is infested with disquiet knights-errant. Society was consumed with two central passions: politics and religion: warfare, dissension, arson, invasion-- 'little kings pillaging and killing one another', as Lévi so graphically put it, on the one hand, and religion, its polar opposite, on the other. If at one part of the narrative, the focus is Paśupati, Bugma Lokeśvara, Cāṅgu or Svayambhū, at the more mundane plane are the King, his fidgety nobles and ministers, generals and chieftains in charge of different forts, scattered all over the not-too-densely populated settlements of the valley. The theatre of their action—military or otherwise—is rarely outside the Valley. The boundaries are those of Nature, as it were—Tokhā in the north, Lele and Pharping in the south, Sāngā, Nālā in the east, Dolakhā in the north-east, Banepā-Panauti in the south-east, and Nuwākot in the west.

Although we have a couple of inscriptions containing references to the Muslim invasion of AD 1349, the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* is our sole source of information on the invasion of the Khasas and the Doyas. The chronicle has preserved for us some graphic accounts of the arson, defilement and acts of vandalism committed by the Sultan and his party, by the Doyas, and by the Khaśas, whose periodic forays into the valley left lasting scars on its politics, society, and, above all, on its culture.

But for the chronicle, the social and political history of a very crucial period of mediaeval Nepal would have come down to us, not only in a pruned, but also in an expurgated version. This chronicle is the only source of trustworthy information on the Maithil King Harisimhadeva (death AD 1326). Unlike the later chronicles which almost unrecognizably distort the truth by presenting Harisimha as a conqueror of Nepal and his descendants as legitimate rulers, the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* notes that he was a political fugitive who died on his way to the valley, and his wife and son had sought political asylum in Bhaktapur. Although they ultimately managed to rise to power by manipulating local politics, the Queen and the Prince of Mithilā had entered Bhaktapur as refugees. Jagatsiṃha, the prince, slowly wins over Nāyakadevi, the sole heiress to Nepalese throne. Her husband, Haricandradeva, and his brother, Gopālacandra, are eliminated. We do not know the end of Jagatsiṃha, but shrewd Devaladevi brings in Jayasthitirājamalla as a bridegroom for her 8-year-old grand-daughter Rājalladevi. The old lady slowly inducts him into the court politics as

her protege. Jayasthitirājamalla, on his part, liquidates most of his rivals, wins over others, shoves the rest out of his way including the legitimate King Jayārjunadeva (aged 33). In a coup de grace, Jayasthitirājamalla banishes the King to Banepā. The pathetic tale of the return of the King to Bhaktapur palace, his confinement, and ultimate death in confinement a year later—are all noted down by the chronicler who is no mean admirer of the new star in Bhaktapur politics.

The rise of Jayasthitirājamalla was almost meteoric. In NS 474 (AD 1354) he arrives in Bhaktapur as a dolāji, stays in Tyamkho for five months, before he gets married with Rājalladevī who was then 8 years old (Folio 53b). In the remaining ten folios of V2, the story is of his steady rise to power—his social, diplomatic, political and, above all, military exploits. There is, of course, no dearth of examples of his piety—his acts of munificence and largesse, his constructive and repair works in the palace, the town and the central places of worship. There is no wonder if he is already eulogised as an incarnation of the Buddha, and incarnation of eight Lokapālas, and of Rama—a just and noble king surrounded by a gracious court (Folio 29a). Yet, but for the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī,* there would not have been a clue left to these gruesome tales—the tales which, in later chronicles, are completely left out and substituted with the invasion of Nānyadeva, Harisimhadeva and, with his descendants' rule, relating Jayasthitirājamalla as a direct descendant of the Karṇāṭa Dynasty!

For the political historian, the V1 and V2 provide invaluable data and a firm chronology for the period between the mid-11th century and the late 14th century AD. We find here a gripping narrative of a mediaeval political order in which the basic political reality is feudalism with its characteristic fragmentation of power. This fragmentation had already set in long ago, perhaps with the receding of the Licchavis. But it sharpens when the legitimacy of the Hārigāun-Devapātan royalty is contested by another parallel capital in Lalitpur. The founding of the Tripura palace probably accentuated it further. Bhaktapur itself had two centres of power—symbolised by two palaces—Tripura in the eastern half of the town and Yuthonimam in the western half. Tripura was occupied initially by the Devas of the Banepā line, terminating finally with the death of Jayārjunadeva in 1382. Yuthonimam was occupied by the Mallas (of Palāúcok or Patan origins). Before Jayasthitirājamalla finally comes to power in 1382, succession to the throne alternated

between these two rival houses. When a Deva was on the throne, a Malla was declared the Crown Prince, and vice versa. The nobility and feudatories were a turbulent class—going their own way, owing, if at all, only marginal loyalty to the crown. The Rāma family of Banepā, the Rābuttas of Pharping, the Vardhanas of Patan, the Pālas of Kathmandu and Patan were powerful families of mini-caesars, ruling heedlessly their little share of the valley's earth, not too mindful of whoever was on the throne in Devapātana, Patan, Tripura or Yuthonimam. Nāyaka Varapāla Bhāro, for instance, is a fine specimen of such king-makers 'able to hold and dispose both the Royal Houses—one who was very influential' (Folio 31a line 5). The political order was infested, not only with fragmentation of power within the ruling families, but also with an overactive nobility 'able to hold and dispose both the Royal Houses'—as the chronicler so incisively puts it. The fabric of this feeble political structure was, moreover, drenched with a passion for killing, pillaging and genocide. As a result, most of the time, the royalty and the nobility were busy in campaigns of mutual extermination. Alliances were ruptured as soon as they were formed. Patan goes out to destroy Devapātan; Devapātana, to destroy Sākhu; Tripura, to demolish Tokhā; Tokhā, to set fire on Nuwākot; Palāúcok encircles Panauti, and so on—almost *ad absurdum*. The most frequently mentioned place of action in the chronicle is the fort, and understandably so.

If the fort and the palace were the centres of political action narrated in the chronicle, the temple was the centre of its cultural life, receiving all the piety, devotion and munificence of the privileged classes in mediaeval society. The shrine of Paśupati stands out as the focus of such largesse. The chronicle gives us a list of gifts, spanning well over six centuries of political twilight, donated between Jayadeva II and Jayarājadeva (AD 1349) (Folios 29b-30a). This, however, does not preclude the chronicler from noting that immediately following the last royal gifts and donations in 1349, the Sultan arrives in the valley, defiles the shrine of Paśupati by breaking it into three pieces (Folio 28b). On the whole, the cultural data provided by the chronicle are some of the richest and rarest for the cultural historian of Nepal. Take, for instance, the anointing and coronations of Jayadeva in 1254 and 1257 in Devapātan (Folios 37b and 39a). The descriptions attest to the fact that even after the great earthquake of 1255, Devapātan continued to be Nepal's ritual centre, if not an effective and operative capital city.

Among the cultural pursuits of the mediaeval courts and the nobility, no less significant is their patronage of drama. As part of the celebrations following the birth of Dharmamalla, the *Rāmāyaṇa* in four acts was staged in AD 1377. Similarly, in NS 440 (1320), a play entitled *Ratnāgata* was staged in the court, in which Rudramalla had personally participated in. In NS 503, Māṇikya's Bhairavananda was staged to celebrate the marriage of Dharmamalla (Folios 60b, 61a, 62a). Rehearsals for the play were done for 24 days. Later, it was staged in all the three cities of the valley (Folio 61a).

In a peasant economy, relying solely upon primitive irrigation and the vagaries of the monsoon, the social and economic importance of either cannot be overemphasised. Among the more important *jatrās* mentioned in the chronicle, the *lamkha-yata* (festival for rain-begging) deserves to be noted. Related to this observation is an entry in Folios 58a-b. The repair work of a canal at Yatapāta in Bhaktapur was completed after a fortnight's voluntary labour in AD 1380. The occasion was celebrated by organising a lively feast, participated in by the King, all the three Princes, the Royal Preceptor, all the important ministers, and the entire citizenry of Yatapāta and Thimi. It must have been a rare moment of gaiety for the chronicler himself, because 220 barrels of raw beer and three buffaloes, among other things itemised in the chronicle, were consumed and shared among all, and the chronicler unequivocally notes, 'everyone felt happy and gay' (Folio 58b, line 5).

The construction of water-conduits, canals, temples and, of course, the forts was all minutely noted by the chronicler. The chronicler is, doubtlessly, a minute observer of life and times, almost a stark realist. His account encompasses not only the rulers, but also the ruled. That is why, every time there is a heavy rainfall or snowfall, a natural calamity (such as earthquake or a failure of monsoon), he takes a quick note of it, and describes its consequences for the common man. Folio 38a is an excellent sample of this preoccupation of the chronicler—a preoccupation which transforms the writing into a very human document. Whenever there is an epidemic, he notes the number of people who perished in it. Whenever there is a failure of the monsoon or crops, he notes its effects on market price. In one entry, he notes that the size of hail in a snowfall was as 'big as that of the orange'! (Folio 44a, line 4). In NS 454, Anekarāma and Kasta Bhā set Bode on fire. The chronicler notes that 24 men, children and adult, 46 buffaloes, 116 calves, 58 sheep,

dogs, chickens, sparrows and pigeons all perished in the fire (Folio 48a: 1-3). This, in so many ways, is a better piece of reporting of fire than what one may read in a contemporary 'on-the-spot' news-story.

The untinted realism of the chronicle is nowhere in greater evidence than in its references to taxation in cash and kind. People paid taxes in cash and in kind, mostly in the form of voluntary labour in construction works, for paving the city with bricks, repairing the forts or palace gates, public or royal baths and canals. A very early instance is, of course, the famous tank Mahendrasara at Yodyam (probably something similar to Siddhipokhari in Bhaktapur). People were levied one dramma each for digging this tank by Mahendradeva, the 'munificent and pleasure-loving prince' (Folio 24b and Folio 31a). Thus, people were taxed in cash but also in times of peace. For example, Jayasthitirājamalla seems to have levied 1200 *pāthis* of paddy from his citizenry before he allowed them to use water from the canal of Melakhā, a privilege granted to his subjects 'till the Sun and the Moon exist' (Folio 60a:4-5).

The Language of the Chronicle

The language of V1 is, as Bendall commented, 'no doubt intended for Sanskrit'. The conventional Sanskritist is, naturally, scandalised at its 'perfectly wild absence of syntax', and the typical response is, for instance, of Petech's:

> Its language is a very ungrammatical and debased Sanskrit, revealing a poor knowledge of the sacred language.[27]

A superficial explanation is to dismiss this linguistic phenomenon outright either as a symptom of the decline in the level of competence in Sanskrit, or to gloss it as 'a poor knowledge of the sacred language' in the scribe. However, as Bendall hinted

> Scientific students of the vernaculars may probably find 'method in madness'. The frequent locution तेन कृतः or कृत for कृतवान or ; it certainly suggest the familiar Hindi उस ने किया. Towards the end (ff. 29b-30) it drops into a form of language which is practically Newari with an unusually large allowance of words borrowed from Aryan sources.[28]

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27 Petech, 1958, p. 6.
28 Bendall, 1903, p. 3.

If there is a 'method in madness', it may have been a more widespread linguistic phenomenon than just the consequences of scribal incompetence or vagaries. Sanskrit appears to be under the pressure of the Indo-Aryan vernaculars which is in clear evidence in the text. At the same time, the contact with Tibeto-Burman has affected its morphology and phonology. It is, therefore, worth investigating if the deviant features are due to language-contact situation (i.e., sociolinguistic) rather than a manifestation of the failure to memorise Panini's aphorisms by the anonymous scribe. That there may have been a 'method in madness' is at least evident, for example, in the consistency with which consonants *m, y, j, n, w* are geminated following non-vocalised-*r*, giving us *mm* for *ma*, *yy* for *ya*, *jj* for *ja*, *nn* for *na*, and *ww* for *wa*.

In the V2, the problem is of a different order. The orthography is relatively consistent; the letter-heads are hooked or curved rather than straight. What is most perplexing is that there is no space between letters in an entry so that one is never sure about the cuts one has made, particularly in obscure passages. For reference or comparison, few bilingual texts from the period have been published or studied. Jorgensen's dictionary as well as the grammar of classical Newari is not so helpful here because his primary sources are limited to later forms of the Newari language (mainly 17th-18th-century narrative texts). In this unrelieved situation, surviving bilingual lexicons (mainly the bilingual *Amarakośa*-s dated NS 501 and 506, and bilingual texts of *Mānavanyāyaśāstra* [NS 500] and *Nāradasmṛti* [NS 527]) have been most illuminating for interpreting some obscure passages of the chronicle.

A constant perusal of the text over the years, reading it over and over again, has provided many an internal clue to the meaning of individual expressions, phrases and words for which, alas, there is no other external gloss available. There is still a small but hard core of isolated items and words which are inexplicable. But, fortunately, they constitute a marginal component of the narrative (e.g., items in a feast, items in a price list, items used in the coronation, etc). The jigsaw puzzle is, hopefully, solved, and the code finally cracked.

The Newari language, as it is used in V2, is an isolating language, with few inflections—both for the noun phrases or the verb phrases. The nominals have hardly any distinct case-suffix. Primitive case-suffixes

स, न, सन function undifferentiatedly for the semantic functions of agent, instrument, location and direction. The verb has three simplex allomorphic forms ending in low vowel (ā) or central vowel (a), or back vowel (o) mostly used for simple past, and a causative form चके, तक, सके. Periphrastic verbs are rare; an auxiliary form जरो is used marginally to express the aspectual meaning of completeness of an action. The gerundive स्वंस्यम् and participial व्ओ functions are hardly differentiated. Sentences end abruptly. The language has a preference for verb-final ends but not all sentences end in a verb. स्वमम्त्वंरटा ब are freely used as emphatic particles. Indo-Aryan loans are converted into Newari verbs by using the verbal suffix (to do), e.g., भरंरप with a semblance of inflection. The lexicon of the language brims with Indo-Aryan loans which at times are unrecognisably assimilated and transformed into the normal phonological/morphological stream of the language. Linguistically speaking, a most valuable component that this chronicle has preserved are the toponyms—the place-names of hillocks, forts, rivers, settlements of Bhaktapur in particular, and of the valley in general. Because this stratum belongs to a period earlier than the 15-16th-century cultural diffusion of Sanskritised place-names, they are priceless for the student of linguistic archaeology as well as for the student of Sanskritisation.

Conclusion

'Positive' historians have in the past frowned upon the chronicles, both mediaeval and modern ones, dismissing them as spurious literary outgrowth, almost devoid of historical substance. The question of reliability of the mediaeval chronicles is more complex than an either/or acceptance or rejection of it in toto. A sound rubric is to test the merit of each individual entry against other available data (coins, colophons, monuments, inscriptions, and other archaeological, ethnographic, linguistic data wherever available), and accept or reject it on that ground. But, as a rule of the thumb, the more remote an entry is from the 1380s, the less is its reliability. This appears to be the case particularly in regard to the V1 and its succession of king-lists. Doubtlessly, both parts of the chronicle 'patently abound in errors'.

> But even so, there still remains the question of what might have led a scribe or writer to insert a serious statement concerning a topic that—if

> we go by the usual contents of the text—cannot have been very essential to the purposes he had in mind.[29]

This, perhaps, is a wholesome response to a complex text which has grown over centuries—possibly by a continuous process of pruning, editing, interpolating and telescoping of one kind or another. The survival of fragments such as the VK and VG testifies clearly to the validity of the pruning-hypothesis as well as the interpolation-hypothesis. The VK is an abridged V1; the VG is an abridged and updated VK. Whereas V1 or V2 has not yet interpolated the genealogy of Nānyadeva or of Harisimhadeva, both VK and VG have already succumbed to this process of distortion.

After centuries of editing, what remains of the text of the chronicle may, therefore, not be as 'spurious' as we tend to think. What is essential now is not just to evaluate isolated items of historical-cultural-social-economic data contained in the older *vamśāvalī* texts, but to assess the tradition of which V1, V2, VK and VG are only different recensions. This, finally, brings us to the all-important question; why a *vamśāvalī* at all in a social order such as ours? The *vamśāvalīs* are not just lists of kings or succession. They are a testimony of the authenticity of their descent. They are an instrument of legitimisation—providing *kṣatriya*-status to a large number of tribes or castes of mixed, if not doubtful, origins—the castes or clans which have produced the ruling families. This is just as true of Jayadeva II claiming a Solar descent in AD 733, as of Sumatijayajitāmitramalla claiming descent from the Sun God in AD 1691. The search for roots—Solar or Lunar—represents what the ruling classes at any point in time have come to believe was their social history. In Nepalese society, the criterion of status was/is birth; mobility was/is possible only through a group. Historically, therefore, what was relevant was the lineage and the chronicle validating the lineage—real or fake—of the group. In other words,

> the new rulers would seek social legitimisation by being incorporated into the earlier elite lineages. The lineages would then be recorded as continuing in an unbroken line of descent from the earlier to the later

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29 Kolver, 1983, p. 142.

> period (which is again a characteristic of the vamśāvalīs of the early mediaeval period). New ruling groups would thus 'latch-onto' the existing lineages and become socially acceptable as well.[30]

What better example of this process of 'latching-onto' the existing lineage can we cite from the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* than the following entries from V1?

> Then Sri Jayasthitirājamalla became victorious. He was brought by Sri Devaladevi. He was an incarnation of Buddha, blessed with the grace of Svayambhū in the Kali Yuga, as well as an incarnation of Eight Lokapālas, the Eight Protectors of all sentient beings. His marriage took place with Rājalladevī and Rājalladevī became his wife. (Folios 28b:5-29a:1-2)

> By chance and the grace of God, 12 years after King Jayārjunadeva ran away (from Bhaktapur?) śrī Sthitirājamalladev is now, in the blessed city of Bhaktapur, the protector of the nation Nepāla. Gentle in dealing with his people, enjoying the full cooperation of his good courtiers, he is like an incarnation of noble Rāma.

> Enthroned as King by the noble King (Jayārjunadeva) himself, just as in the past Rāmacandra put Rāvana's own brother Vibhiṣaṇa by destroying the great enemy. NS 501 Mārga Kṛṣṇa Dvādaśī.

Of course, we need not be surprised at this entry. This was the date of banishment of the legitimate King Jayārjunadeva who passed away nearly 14 months later (NS 502 Māgha Kṛṣṇa 5) in confinement at Kvātha Chem!—a safe place to which Jayasthitirājamalla had consigned him.

The Chronology of Nepalese Kings

This positive chronology is pieced together by collating three main sources—inscriptions, manuscript colophons and chronicles.

Our sources for the Licchavis are limited to their inscriptions. For the four centuries of their documented rule, we have nearly 200 inscriptions. This number is, however, misleading as most of the inscriptions are fragmentary and short, containing little or no historical

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30 Thapar, 1978, p. 259.

information. The ones containing historical data are not evenly distributed either.

The first ancient inscriptions of Nepal were published a century ago. Controversies still persist on the interpretation of their chronology, particularly on the assignment of two different sets of eras used in these inscriptions. The first is dated between 386-526/535 years, the second set is dated between 29-301 years. The present consensus of opinions among scholars is that the first set is dated according to the śaka Era (founded in AD 78) whereas the second set is dated according to Mānadeva Era (founded in AD 576). All eras in use in ancient and mediaeval Nepal are Kārttikādi, i.e., begin on the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārttikā (ca. October 20).

However, the interpretation on ancient Nepalese chronology has yet to confront an almost insurmountable problem—the problem of interpreting the data of intercalated months available in Licchavi inscriptions. In this connection, Petech's caveat is worth recollecting,

> By no Siddhānta, by no system, with no era, can we get intercalations at the intervals stated in the (Licchavi inscriptions).[31]

What we call the positive chronology of Licchavi kings is thus a shaky list of about 25 names and 30 dates.

For the 320 year rule of the Thakuris we have 24 short, unrevealing, and fragmentary inscriptions. The chronology for this period is pieced together with the help of manuscript colophons. Mercifully, Nepalese scribes noted down, not only the time and place of copying of manuscripts, but also the name of the reigning king. The chronology of 'the dark period of Nepalese history' is thus a skeleton structure of 30 names and 45 dates, a few of which are compiled from the chronicles.

Only 118 inscriptions of any consequence have survived from the 255-year rule of the early Mallas. Some of their dated are collated from colophons. At this point, however, the chronicles become richer in detail and genealogical data.

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31 Petech, 1961, p. 230.

The Licchavis	
[Jayadeva I]	
[12 un-named kings]	
[Vadṛṣdeva]	
[Saṅkaradeva]	
[Dharmadeva]	
Mānadeva	śaka Era 386-427 (AD 464-505)
[Mahīdeva]	
Vasantadeva	428-454
Vāmānadeva	460
Rāmadeva	467
Gaṇadeva	482-487
Gaṅgādeva	489
[Mānadeva II]	[498, founder of a new Era AD 576]
Sivadeva I	512-526/535
Aṃśuvarmā	Mānadeva Era 29-44 (AD 605-620)
Udayadeva	45
Dhruvadeva-Jiṣṇugupta	48-49
Bhīmārjundadeva-Jiṣṇugupta	55-57
Bhīmārjunadeva-Viṣṇugupta	64-65
Narendradeva	67-103
Sivadeva II	118-129
Jayadeva II	137-157
Mānadeva III	180
Balirāja	250
Baladeva	271
Mānadeva IV	301 (AD 878)
The Thakuris	
NS 1/AD 879–NS 320/AD 1200	
[Rāghavadeva]	ca. NS 1-39 (Founder of Nepāla Saṃvat on Thursday, October 20, 879)
Saṅkaradeva	Bhādra śukla 15, 40
[Jayadeva]	
[Vikramadeva]	
Guṇakāmadeva	Māgha 107-110
Narendradeva-Udayadeva	Mārga śukla 15, 119
Udayadeva	Caitra Kṛṣṇa 12, 124

Nirbhayadeva	Caitra śukla 13, 125
Nirbhayadeva-Rudradeva	Phālguṇa śukla, 128
Bhojadeva	Jyeṣṭha śukla 2, 131
Rudradeva-Bhojadeva	Prathmāṣāḍha śukla 13, 132
Rudraeva-Bhojadeva-Lakṣmīkāmadeva	Caitra śukla 10, 132
Lakṣmīkāmadeva	Srāvaúa śukla 2, 144-Vaiśākha śukla 3, 159
[Vijayadeva]	The ruler of 'Half-Kingdom of Lalitpur" (V1 23b:3; VK3:3)
Bhāskaradeva	Srāvaṇa śukla 10, 165-Aśvina Kṛṣṇa 6, 167
Baladeva	Māgha śukla 8, 172-Māgha Kṛṣṇa 3, 180
Pradyumnakāmadeva	Jyeṣṭha Kṛṣṇa 11, 183-Māgha Kṛṣṇa 10, 186
Nāgarjunadeva	188 - ?
Saṅkaradeva	Aṣāḍha śukla 3, 189-Caitra śukla 15, 202
Vāmadeva	Bhādra Kṛṣṇa, 204 - ?
Harṣadeva	Vaiśākha śukla 15, 207-Phālguṇa śukla 13, 217
Sivadeva	219-246 (V1 24a:3)
Indradeva	āṣāḍḍha Kṛṣṇa 8, 247-Kārttika śukla 5, 256
Mānadeva	Pauṣa Kṛṣṇa 13, 258-Kārttika śukla 15, 260
Narendradeva	Phālguṇa śukla 6, 254-Dvīpauṣa śukla 11, 265
Anandadeva	the founder of the Kingdom of Bhaktapur; crowned on Māgha Kṛṣṇa 1, 267 (V1 24b:5), Prathamāṣāḍha Kṛṣṇa 5, 367-Phālguṇa śukla 11, 286; died 287?
Rudradeva	Pauṣa Kṛṣṇa 13, 287 (VK7:6-7 has 267, which is evidently a scribal error); crowned Mārga śukla 15 (Agrahāyaṇa Pūrṇimā) 295
Amṛtadeva	Vaiśakha śukla 3, 295-Bhādra Kṛṣṇa 9, 299 (V1 31b:4)

Someśvaradeva	Kārttika Kṛṣṇa 6, 299 (VK8:2); crowned Kārttika śukla 2, 301
Gunakāmadeva	Pauṣa ṭukla 7, 305 (VK8:6); crowned 307 Phālguṇa Kṛṣṇa 6
Laksmikāmadeva	Kārttika Kṛṣṇa 313-śrāvaṇa śukla 3, 317
Vijayakāmadeva	Vaiśakha śukla 3, 312-Māgha śukla Sauridivasa 320.

The Early Mallas
NS 321 / AD 1200–NS 515 / AD 1395

Arimalla	Kārttika śukla 10, 3210-Jyṭha Kṛṣṇa 7, 336
Abhayamalla	Jyestha Sukla 15, 337-Asadha Sukla 8, 375
Jayadeva	Asvina Krsna 2, 374 (V1 39a:3) Marga Śukla 15, 377 (V1 37b:1-2) Crowned twice? Ruled for 2 years and 7/8 months Bhādra 377
Jayabhīmadeva	Caitra śukla 5, 380-Pauṣa śukla 12, 390
Jayasimhamalla	Aśvina 10, 391 - ?
Jayanantamalla	Caitra śukla 9, 395-śrāvaṇa Kṛṣṇa 13, 428 Jayānandamalla Vaiśākha Kṛṣṇa 9, 434-śrāvaṇa śukla 1, 438
Jayārimalla	Caitra Kṛṣṇa 12, 440 (V244a:2); crowned āśvina śukla 8, 464, died in an earthquake in *Devapātana* (V251a:1)
The throne of Nepal vacant ?	āśvina śukla 8, 464-śrāvana Kṛṣṇa 3, 467. VK (13:7), however, shows that Jayarājadeva was already crowned, with the consent of both the Royal Houses, on śrāvana Kṛṣṇa 4, 464. This must be a scribal error for 467 as Jayārimalla, the legitimate ruler, was still alive till Aśvina śukla 7, 464

Jayarājadeva	śrāvaṇa Kṛṣṇa 4, 467 (V1 28b:1-2); crowned with the consent of both the Royal Houses, Māgha Kṛṣṇa 8, 481
Jayārjunadeva	Vaiśākha śukla 2, 480 (?)-Māgha Kṛṣṇa 5, 502 (died in the Kwātha Cheṃ confinement)
Jayasthitirājamalla	Māgha Kṛṣṇa 5, 502-Bhādra Krsna 6, 515

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Annex I: The Vamśāvalī king-lists

A careful analysis of the Vamśāvalī king-lists and comparison of these lists with positive chronology show certain basic syndromes.

The *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* has, for instance, the following kings who are not available in *Kaisher Vamśāvalī* or in Kirkipatrick or in the inscriptions: Campadeva, Jivagupta, Manavarma, Mahipala, Devaladeva, and Vasantadeva. Both the abridged Vamśāvalī and Kirkpatrick repeat Visnugupta, Bhimarjunadeva, Jayadeva and Baladeva, though with different regnal years.

Several kings available in the inscriptions are missing from the Vamśāvalī list, such as VaMānadeva, Ramadeva, Gangadeva, Dhruvadeva and Jayadeva II. On the other hand, we do not yet have any historical documents for several kings mentioned in these king-lists, such as Krtavarma, Vardhamānadeva, Sankaradeva, and Javadeva III.

Similarly, for the mediaeval period, the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* commits the error of omission of four historically attested kings:

Sankaradeva	NS	40
Nirbhayadeva	NS	125
Bhojadeva-Rudradeva	NS	132

The VK omits Jayadeva, the founder of the half kingdom of Lalitpur and Bhaskaradeva (NS 165-167), the refactory feudatory of Patan. Kirkapatrick omits Sankaradeva (NS 189-203). Both Kirkapatrick and the abridged Vamśāvalī omit Gunakamadeva (NS 305-316), the legendary founder of Kathmandu.

Another major syndrome is one of divergence among the king-lists. For the mediaeval period, the lists diverge on an interesting point: the inclusion or omission of the three early mediaeval kings:

Jayadeva: included in V1, omitted in VK, VG, and Kirkaptrick
Sahadeva: Omitted in V1, included in VK, VG, and Kirkpatrick
Vikramadeva: Omitted in VK and Kirkpatrick, included in V1, VG

None of these three kings has so far been attested historically in any other documents. Whether they were contemporaries ruling two or three kingdoms, or joint rulers of the same kingdom, or rulers succeeding one after another is at present a subject of conjecture.

At any rate, confusions in the *Vamśāvalī* king-lists are not always meaningless nor always due to sloppy scribal errors. With the exception of the presence or absence of one or other king in the lists, the king-lists are remarkably consistent. The order of succession may temporarily go astray, but there seems to be a close identity of regnal years, not only among the king-lists, but also between the king-lists and the positively verifiable chronology.

The confusion in the *Vamśāvalī* king-lists following the death of Arimalla in an earthquake on September 14, 1344, is a clear testimony of the subsequent political chaos.

The Licchavis

Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī		Abridged *Vaṃśāvalī*		Kirkpatrick	
Viśvadeva	100	Vṛṣadeva	57	Brikh Deo	57
Mānadeva	41	Śankaradeva	50	Sunker Deo	50
Śaṅkaradeva	40	Dharmadeva	51	Bhurma Deo	51
Dharmadeva	41	Mānadeva	39	Maun Deo	39
Mahīdeva	41	Mahīdeva	51	Mahe Deo	51
Vasantadeva	39	Vasantadeva	56	Bussunt Deo	56
Udayadeva	45	Udayadeva	47	Oodey Deo	47
Gaṇadeva	45	Mānadeva	45	Maun Deo	45
Guṇakāmadeva	50	Sunakāmadeva	50	Sookaum Deo	50
Śivadeva	41.6	Śivadeva	41.6	Seo Deo	41.6
Campādeva	41.9				
Narendradeva	34	Narendradeva	34	Nurredur Deo	34
Bhīmadeva	14	Bhīmadeva	16	Bhema Deo Burmah	16
Jīvagupta	74	Viṣṇugupta	74	Bishen Gupt	74
Viṣṇugupta	71	Viṣṇugupta	61	Kishnoo Gupt	61
Bhumigupta	45	Bhūmigupta	45	Bhoomy Gupt	40
Śivadeva	41	Śivadeva	41	Seo Deo Burmah	41
Aṃśuvarmā	43	Aṃśuvarmā	53	Unghoo Burmah	42
Mānavarmā	65				
Kṛtavarmā	76	Kṛtavarmā	18	Kirtoo Burmah	18
Mahīpala Devaladeva	10				
Bhīmārjunadeva	35	Bhīmārjunadeva	37	Bheem Arjoon Deo	39
Narendradeva	13	Nandadeva	13	Nund Deo	13
Śivadeva	16	Śivadeva	16	Seo Deo	16
Narendradeva	35	Narīndradeva	37	Nurrender Deo	37
Baladeva	17	Baladeva	17	Bul Deo	17
Vardhamānadeva	16	Śaṅkaradeva	12	Sunker Deo	12
Śaṅkaradeva	12	Vardhamānadeva	16		
Vasantadeva	21	Śaṅkaradeva	12		
		Bhīmārjunadeva	16	Bhem Arjoon Deo	16
		Jayadeva	19	Jye Deo	19
		Baladeva	16	Sree Bull Deo	16

Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī		*Kaisher Vaṃśāvalī*		Abridged *Vaṃśāvalī*		Kirkpatrick	
Rudradeva	27	(... de) va	26	Candradeva	27	Condur Deo	27
Jayadeva	42.5	Jayadeva	42.7	Jayadea	42.7	Jye Deo	42.7
Baladeva	11	Baladeva	11	Baladeva	11	Bul Deo	11
Balārjunadeva	21.5	Balārjunadeva	21.5	Balārjunadeva	36.7	Ballunjoon Deo	36.7
Manadeva	36	Mānadeva	36	Mānadeva	36	? ? ?	

Note: The fragmentary *Vamśāvalī* at Kaisher Library begins with (Rudrade)va only.

The Thakuris

Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī		*Kaisher Vaṃśāvalī*		*Abridged Vaṃśāvalī*		*Kirkpatrick*	
Rāghavadeva	43.6	Rāghavadeva	63.6	Rāghavadeva	63.8	Ragheed Deo	63
Jayadeva	10	Saṅkaradeva	18.6	Saṅkaradeva	18.6	Seeker De	88.6
Vikramadeva	8.9	Sahadeva	33.9	Sahadeva	33.9	Soho Deo	33.9
Narandradeva	1.6	Narendradeva	1.6	Vikramadeva	1	Narrender Deo	1.6
Guṇakāmadeva	85.6	Guṇakāmadeva	85.6	Narendradeva	1.6	Goonakam Deo	85.6
Udayadeva	5.5	Udayadeva	6	Udayadeva	6	Oodoy Deo	6
Lakṣmīkāmadeva	21	Nirhbayadeva	5	Nirbhayadeva	5	Nurbhoy Deo	7
Vijayadeva	31	Bhojadeva+ Rudra-deva	9.7	Bhojadeva+ Rudra-deva	9.7	Bhaj Deo Budro	9.7
Bhāskaradeva	3	Lakṣmīkāmadeva	21	Lakṣmīkāmadeva	21	Letchmi Cam-deo Dutt	21
Balavantadeva	12	Baladeva	12	Jayadeva	20	Jye Deo reduced refactory tributary Bhāskara, of Patan	20
Padmadeva	6	Padmadeva	6	Bhaskaradeva +Jayadeva	7.4		
Nāgārjunadeva	2	Nāgārjunadeva	3	Baladeva	12	Ooday Deo	7.1
Śaṅkaradeva	15	Śaṅkaradeva	17	Padmadeva	12	Bull Deo	12
Vāmadeva	3	Vāmadeva	3	Nāgārjundeva	3	Puddiem Deo	6
Harṣadeva	14	Harṣadeva	16	Saṅkaradeva	17	Naug Arjoon	3
Śivadeva	27.7	Śivadeva	27.7	Vāmadeva	3	Bam Deo	3
Indradeva	15	Indradeva	12	Harṣadeva	16	Sree Hurkh Deo	16
Mānadeva	4	Mānadeva	4	Śivadeva	27.7	Seo Deo	27.7
Narendradeva	6.5	Narendradeva	6.5	Indradeva	12	Indro Deo	12
Ā(nandadeva)	20	Nandadeva	20	Mānadeva	4.7	Maun Deo	4.7
Rudradeva	8.1	Rudradeva	8.1	Narendradeva	6.4	Nurrender Deo	6.4
Amṛtadeva	3.11	Amṛtadeva	3.11	Anandadeva	20	Rudro Deo	80.1

Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī	*Kaisher Vaṃśāvalī*	*Abridged Vaṃśāvalī*	*Kirkpatrick*
Someśvaradeva 4	Someśvaradeva 3	Amṛtadeva 3.11	Omret Deo 3.11
Guṇakāmadeva 3	Gunakāmadeva (?) (crowned NS 305 Pauṣa Sudi 7, Sunday)	Someśvaradeva 6.3 (crowned NS 299 Kārtik Kṛṣṇa 6, Friday)	Someesur Deo 6.3
Vijayakāmadeva 7	Vijayakāmadeva 6.7	Vijayakāmadeva 50.7	Buz Caum Deo (unknown)

The Early Mallas

Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī	*Kaisher Vaṃśāvalī*	*Abridged Vaṃśāvalī*	*Kirkpatrick*
Ari Malla 25.10	Arimalladeva 31.9	Arimalla 31.9	Any Mull 31.9
Abhaya Malla 42.6	Abhaya Malla 48.2	Abhaya Malla 48.2	Obhay Mull 48.2
Jayadeva 2.8	Jayadeva 2.7	Jayadeva 2.7	Jey Deb 2.7
Bhīmadev 13.7			
Jayasiha Malla 2.7			
Ananta Malla 32.1	Ananta Malla 32.1	Ananta Malla 32.1	Unwunt Mull Deo 32.10
Ānandadeva (?)	Ānandadeva (?)	Ānandadeva (?)	Jye Nund Deo(?)/ Jye Sing Mull/ Jye Ruero Mull Sutty Naik Deb +Harrir Chunder Deo, Rajah of Banares
Arimalla 24.6 (?) (crowned NS 440, Caitra Kṛṣṇa 12, died in an earthquake on Āśvina Śukla 7, 464/ Sept. 14, 1344)	Arimalla	Arimalla (brings the dynasty of Nānyadeva and his successors upto Sthitirājamalla)	Raj Letchmi, deposed by Jye Dub, deposed by Hurr Singh Deo, Rajah of Semroun Ghur in December 1323
Rājadeva 12.5 (?) (crowned NS 467, Śrāvaṇa Kṛṣṇa 4 died in a fire, NS 481 Māgha Kṛṣṇa 8/ Jan. 30, 1361)	Rājadeva (crowned NS 464, Śrāvaṇa Kṛṣṇa 4) (brings the dynasty of Nānyadeva and his successors upto Sthitirājamalla)		(brings the dynasty of Śukla 2, 480 Nānyadeva and his successors upto Sthitirājamalla)
Arjunadeva (crowned Vaiśākha died NS 502 Māgha Kṛṣṇa 5)			
Sthitirājamalla (NS 502, died NS 515 Bhādra Kṛṣṇa 6)			

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Introduction to the Historical Analysis of the *Gopālarājavaṃśavalī*

This manuscript was submitted to CNAS in 1980-81, by the late Mr Dhanavajra Vajrācārya as a part of his research project relating to the translation and interpretation of the *Gopālarājavaṃśavalī*. For reasons none too clear to me, both the translation and the interpretation of the chronicle had remained unpublished until I saw the file tucked under the carpet in Dhanavajra's room. With the Executive Director, Kumar Khadga Bikram Shaha's permission, I got the Nepali transcription and translation published by the Nepal Research Centre, together with my Introduction, English translation, Glossary, Chronological Tables, and Indexes of Place-names and Personal Names in 1984. Since Dhanavajra had spent more than a decade reading and deciphering this difficult and unyielding manuscript, written in corrupt Sanskrit and mediaeval Newari, nearly like his morning recitation of the *Nāmasaṃgīti*, I had requested him to write an introduction to the edition, particularly focusing on the nature of the text. However, to my utter dismay, he did not agree to it. Nor did he take much interest in reading the proofs of the text of the Nepali translation, much less the Nepali indexes until the last minute when he heard that his hostile critics were going to write a destructive review of it! This had remained an unresolved mystery to me to the end of his life because I could not make out whether it was out of disdain or modesty. We had, however, agreed to leave the English translation and glossary as they are, giving the reader the benefit of doubt as my translation diverged from his at many a place. I had also made it a point to seek his opinion as well as

feedback on my Preface and Introduction to the edition of the *Gopālarājavaṃśavalī*.

Dhanavajra studied Sanskrit language and literature, epigraphy and history at the *gurukula* founded by the late Pandit Nayarāj Pant in the early 1950s. The school initially had 21 inmates, of whom eight managed to survive the regime just for a few years. How many actually graduated from this school is still a matter of controversy. Following bizarre regulations, such as not reading English at all, nor using a Western-style jacket, nor Roman alphabet, nor Julian calendar, it followed an 'eight-year curriculum' based on rote learning of the 'fundamental Sanskrit classics'. These prescribed texts were the *Amarakoṣa*, the *Astādhyāyī*, the *Bhaṭṭīkāvya*, the *Raghuvaṃśa*, the *Harṣacarita*, the *Arthaśāstra*, and for those interested, Bhaskarācārya's *Siddhānta-śiromaúī*. In all likelihood, Dhanavajra was sent to this school by his parents hoping that he would follow their family profession which was priesthood or āyurveda.

Although no student came to this *gurukula* to do history nor to study astronomy, because of the Guru's predilections, some of them developed an interest in epigraphy and history as well. In the list of 100 books the students were recommended, circulated only recently, there is almost none on the social sciences nor any on historiography. Yet, no sooner than they had a little grounding in Sanskrit they set out on a mission of 'amendments' to the dates and names given in the Nepali textbooks of history and other published material by the then-established names. In the mid-1950s, a vocal campaign was launched by the denizens of this *gurukula*, attacking Principal Bhairav Bahadur Pradhan, Bal Chandra Sharma, Dilli Raman Regmi, Kaiser Bahadur KC, and Surya Bikram Gyewali, above all—all trained in the Western-style Indian institutions. In this campaign of public defamation, Dhanavajra was, of course, in the forefront. They issued little booklets of corrections—in all 64 issued in about two decades, challenging publicly all the established names in Nepali history-writing to come to meet them for open public debate, for *'śāstrārtha'*. On a more sober vein, they contributed to the transliteration and edition of some 184 ancient, mediaeval and modern inscriptions; they also founded a Nepali-language quarterly, *Pūrṇimā*, devoted to historical research, now running to No 122.

In 1969, with nearly a U-turn in his career, DVV resigned from the Editorial Board of the journal as well as from the association to join the

mainstream academia in Nepal as an Instructor in Epigraphy in the Institute of Nepalology at Tribhuvan University. During its formative period, the Institute functioned as a nuclear cell which later on flowered as Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies. Since then, he gradually distanced himself from a number of their articles of faith, probably increasingly coming under the influence of the Western traditions in history taught in the university departments. Since its foundation, DVV had worked consistently at CNAS as a most prolific and productive scholar, submitting annually a survey report, or a research report to this institution to consider for publication. The most acclaimed one of these is his compilation, edition and Nepali translation and commentary on the Licchavi inscriptions in Sanskrit (1973).

Among the contributions of DVV to Nepali historiography, his transliteration, Nepali translation and interpretation of the *Gopālarājavmśāvalī* (GV) is a major one. Though harshly criticised by his detractors, his work on this complex manuscript is a solid basis of our current understanding of it. Like all historical writing, DVV's too was a mixture of 'hard core of facts, surrounded by a thick pulp of disputable interpretations' to repeat the words of H.E. Carr. In order to assess DVV's contribution to the analysis and interpretation of the *Gopālarājavaṃśavalī*, we have to, of necessity, go back to some articles of faith which he was schooled in. Pandit Nayarāj and his 'nationalist' school believed that the kingdom of Nepal was 'vast' during Golden/Licchavi era and that it became fragmented with the founding of the Nepala-saṃvat in AD 879. Nepālamaṇḍala, the centre, as they understood it, became gradually weak, and as a result the unified kingdom became fragmented into 50 or more principalities or '*Viṣaya*'. They believed that all the *viṣayas* were therefore 'outside of the Kathmandu Valley'. It was because the centre was 'weak', separate kingdoms of the Khasas (ca. AD 1150-1500) and the Tirhute Doyas (AD 1097-1325) were founded—as if these regions had always or ever been densely inhabited, or ruled directly from the *Mānagriha* in Harigaon or Kailaśakūṭa Bhavana in Devapatan in the Nepal Valley.

If we follow the geographical distribution of about 200 extant Licchavi inscriptions, the kingdom did not extent beyond Nuwakot in the west, Dumjā in the east, Chapaligaon in the north, and Tistung-Palung in the south.

DVV believed that Nepala-maṇḍala was at least as big as modern Nepal— extending from the Mahakali to the Mechi. The modern 'nation-

state' of Nepal came into existence with the restoration of the Naya Muluk to the Gorkhalis by the East India Company on November 10, 1860. He believed that during the palmy days of the Kingdom, there was a powerful monarchy ruling in Nepal, holding down all the rebellious feudatories from the east to the west, whipping them to meek obedience from a central location—not too different from the Narayanhiti Palace controlling all the 75 districts and 14 zones all apiece like a monolithic nation-state during the Panchayat rule. Such a vision could have been entertained only by a scholar unfamiliar with the nature of mediaeval feudal order in South Asia. In the first place, the very term *maṇḍala* is a part of the medieval 'segmentary state', a political order in which rival feudatories entered into a working temporary consortium of friendship following periodic spells of enmity. This political intransigence, founded on the culture of military adventurism and opportunitism, is the essence of the so-called *maṇḍala*-theory.[1] As for the centre, there never was one in mediaeval South Asia after Harṣavardhana's death in AD 647 or the invasion of the Huṇas.[2] Even during the heyday of the Licchavi 'dynasty', there were the Guptas, the Varmans, the Senas and the Palas, not to speak of overshadowing personages such as Ravigupta, Bhaumagupta, Jiṣṇugupta, Viṣṇugupta, Mahāraja-Mahāsāmanta Kramalila and, of course, Aṃśuvarman.

DVV's faith in the 'strong center' holds little water because such a center did not exist at any time in the chronicle of Nepal recorded by the GV. Even in a petty state of Bhaktapur there were two 'palaces'—the Yuthonimam (located probably in the western city or market-centre) and the Tripura, founded by śivadeva in the 11th century. The properly crowned king of early mediaeval Nepal probably lived in Devapatan in the Yendala Palace where all the Kings up to Sthitirajamalla used to be crowned. Even after the collapse of the Licchavi capital in great fires, floods or earthquakes, Devapatan continued to be the ritual capital. At that time, Patan was ruled by the hereditary family of Seven Families; Pharping by the Rābuttas claiming descent from the Solankis of Gujarat, and Kathmandu by the Thakuris descended from the Malla Varmans of Nuwakot who traded with Tibet. Sharing the throne between two

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1 See 'The Segmentary State: Interim Reflections', *Puruṣārtha* No 13, pp. 217-237; R.S. Sharma, *Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation*, Orient Longman, Calcutta, 2001.

2 See Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*, London, 2002, especially pp. 440-489.

brothers, between uncle and nephew, between collaterals, and or between rival feudatory families, say of Banepa or Palanchowk, were the norm—the order of the day. These were many forms of political compromise or contemporary formulas devised according to power dynamics of a turbulent social order.

Bhaktapur emerged as a centre of political drama with the arrival in winter 1326 of the refugee party from Simarāvangaṛh, led by widowed Queen Devaladevī and Prince Jagatsiṃha Kuhmara, following the death of Harasiṃhadeva at Tinpātan in Dolakha. The party lived in Tripura, the home of Rudramalla, Devaladevi's brother. This party swiftly moved in to fill in the power vacuum created by the death of Ari Malla, a protege of Rudramalla, in a devastating earthquake in AD 1344 at the Devapatan palace. The throne of Nepal was vacant for three following years, until a compromise King was found in Rajamalla in AD 1347. Hardly two years had passed since his coronation at several places, that the Sultan of Bengal, Samsud-din-Illyas ravaged the valley in November 1349, setting fire to several shrines and ravaging Paśupati linga, Svayambhū caitya, and Pimbaha in Patan.

On this chaotic political theatre, there was evidently no central source of political authority as there were more king-makers than the king, and there obviously never was a standing army, but only hordes of periodic raiders. One has only to consult the place-name index to the GV: the valley was nearly littered with forts, so much so that even the Buddhist monasteries, such as the Kvātha Bāhas in Patan or Kathmandu and the Itum Bāha in Kathmandu were more of forts than monasteries of celibate monks. The only occasion when weaponry was displayed was on the eve of Mahānavamī, the Lohābhisāra, when Sthitirājamalla distributed 1800 pieces of swords to his retinue for display at an 'axe-procession', presumably to psychologically intimidate his potential rivals and contending elite!

For 40 years until her death in AD 1366, Devaladevī was at the centre of Bhaktapur political drama. Although we do not know who the parents of Sthitirājamalla were, he was a protege of Devaladevī, brought to Bhaktapur as a dolāji for her granddaughter, Rājalladevī. At the age of eight, this princess was married to Sthirāajamalla in 1354. His rise to power had been insured and meteoric since.

In this scenario, as Jayasthitirajamalla was a taller figure than other contenders, DVV thought that he came from India! He interpreted the

Newari word, *kovane* as the South, i.e., India. This is where history gets twisted by vagaries of interpretation. However, had DVV read the text more carefully, *kovane*, actually means the southern part of Kathmandu, where he sent a caravan of presents on Karttika śukla Pratipadā, the Mha-puja, to his relatives.[3] The caravan is clearly termed as *Bādhāva*, a present for relatives. Why would an Indian prince send such a present to the Kelā-cheṃ at Yaṅgala, southern Kathmandu, which was the home of the Mallas, and still is.

By nature, DVV was keenly interested in political history. So a change of dynasty mattered a great deal to him. His primary worry had always been, 'Is the NEW King of the Same Old Dynasty?' This question is, however, misleading if we limit the dynastic issues to surnames of the ruling kings because nearly all the Kings of Nepal, including the present one is a Deva! How can a Hindu King be anything but a Deva? Unfortunately, not all the early mediaeval Mallas belonged to the single Dynasty, much less to the scion of pure blue blood though they all called themselves 'Deva' or direct descendants of the Sun! No matter whether they were the Devas or the Mallas, not even in early mediaeval Nepal was there a single dynastic rule. One clue could have been their '*gotra* and *pravara*' but except for the later Mallas (who were Māṇḍavya gotra), we do not know of the others.

As the political chronology of about three centuries NS 177-509 was very important for DVV, he limited himself to the dates of the ruling kings mentioned in the GV, and tried to verify these laboriously with the help of the colophons of contemporary manuscripts and inscriptions. Although he copiously used these sources he never documented them so that the sources of these inscriptions and manuscripts cannot be easily verified. We do not know where they are located. Nor do we know how many of these are new ones, unpublished by anyone before him in 1980. Probably, this is the weakest point in the methodology of DVV in this manuscript. Only a few sub-headings in the DVV manuscript draw the reader's attention to events other than the succession of kings. Otherwise, they are the dates of invasions of the Khasiyās, the ḍoyas and the Muslim Invasion—the three apocalyptic events of early mediaeval Nepal valley. As in his earlier papers on King śivadeva, or

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3 See Kamal P. Malla, *A Dictionary of Classical Newari*, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, 2000, pp. 63, 66.

on the Powerful Family of the Rāmavarddhanas of Banepā, or on the ḍoyas, DVV never deviated from the text or texts before him. Rarely, if ever, he reflected on the context, the social and cultural context that produced the text.

However, the GV is not merely a political history: it is a rich source of economic, social and, above all, cultural history to which DVV gives scanty or no attention. There is hardly anything in the DVV manuscript on the development of property rights in land, on the emerging caste structure, the evolution of coinage, the social structure and the administrative system, on trade and costs of living. For all of these themes, there is plenty of material in the GV, particularly on monuments, buildings, temples, temple-donations and construction works of great artistic significance. Although he wrote a perceptive paper on śivadeva, DVV thought that there was no evidence for the silver coinage of śivadeva 'with an image of the Siṃha'. Even an amateur like me has three pieces of the *dramma*, and their plates were published by Ramesh Kumar Dhungel in the *Economic History of Medieval Nepal*, a later CNAS publication!

Curiously enough, DVV does not write anything about the text as such, its structure, its syntax or absence of it, its style and vocabulary. As I have dealt extensively with these topics in the facsimile edition of the GV, I do not wish to repeat them here. No doubt, some of the points I made in 1984 need rethinking and the glosses, in particular, deserve revisiting. The GV consists of two distinct texts, though they are later copied as a single connected text consisting of 49 folios at the court of Jayasthitirājamalla: the first part is in corrupt Sanskrit, and stylistically similar to king-lists or annals compiled from several different sources. The second part is in mediaeval or old Newari. It is in fact a *thyāsaphū*, a historical diary similar to the later 17th-18th-century ones published as *atitihāsika-ghatanāvalī*, containing notes focused on the court, the temples, the forts and on society at large, probably the work of a court astrologer or scribe. Unfortunately, DVV in his interpretation deals only with the second part. The first part is focused on the shrine of Paśupati, and it may very well have been copied as a temple chronicle as it lists all the 21 repoussé or ornaments donated to the sacred temple by different generations of kings and courtiers. The second part, on the other hand, begins with the founding of four Vaiṣṅva sites, relating to the mythic and the historical beginnings of the Valley.

DVV believed that the Nepāla-saṃvat was founded by King

Rāghavadeva as Paśupatibhaṭṭāraka Saṃvat, not by śaṇkhadhara śākhvā. However, in the abridged text he cites, we have only 'a new epoch-era was founded at the Paśupatibhaṭṭāraka'. It does not say 'by Rāghavadeva' as such. The GV ignores the event completely as its major context was Kathmandu, not Bhaktapur, where the GV is compiled.

DVV believed that all the *Viṣayas*—Mamgvara, Pannaga, Udayapur, Jilgodgama, Phanapingga, Gaṇḍī-gulma, Dhavalasrotapura, Paúcāvatadeśa, etc, are all 'outside the valley as they are ruled by feudatories, not directly from the center'. A *viṣaya* is only an administrative division; it was used as such in all Indian epigraphy, no matter where it is located, near the capital or away from it.[4] It was in this sense that a Licchavi inscription (No. 144 in the DVV's 1973 edition), the Narayanchaur Inscription of Jayadeva (ca AD 710) refers to a Vodda Viṣaya. Similarly, Gaṇḍī-gulma is not in Gulmi district, but near Oṃ-tha-co at Theco. Similarly, Maṃgvara, is certainly not in Magrāt, nor *Rāṇaka* a Magar. *Rāṇaka*, according to Sircar is merely a feudal title, held by many in Indian inscriptions.[5]

We owe much to DVV for our understanding of ancient and mediaeval Nepal. Liberal as he was with his material, he had given this manuscript to Luciano Petech who made extensive use of it in his revision of the *Medieval History of Nepal A.D. 750-1482* (Rome: IsMEO, 1984). Anyone who compares the revised edition with the 1958 edition can see how much of the book comes from the labours of DVV.

Instilled as he was with nationalistic fervour, DVV missed the nature of the context, i.e., the society and the polity in transition that produced the text. He mistook mediaeval feudatories of the Valley for the sardārs of Pṛthvināràyaṇa Shāh, and reading the GV for yet another inspiring nationalist document, such as the so-called *Divyopadeśa*!

As Michael Witzel, Wales Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard, USA, has shown, in a recent paper 'On Indian Historical Writing: The Role of the Vaṃśāvalīs', the GV is of a great significance in the South Asian Historiographical traditions.[6] Texts such as this clearly refute the oft-repeated trite statement of Orientalists that we the South Asians 'possess no history'.

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4 See D.C. Sircar's *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 194-195.

5 See Sircar, op cit.

6 See *Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies*, No 2, 1990, pp. 1-57.

31

Nepālavaṃśāvalī: A Complete Version of the *Kaisher Vaṃśāvalī*

On July 18, 1985, exactly a month after the release of the facsimile edition of the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvlī*, I found a *vaṃśāvalī* complete manuscript in the National Archives, Kathmandu. Working among the texts of modern chronicles I immediately recognised this manuscript as a complete version of the fragment of a *vaṃśāvalī* popularly known among scholars as the Kaisher Vaṃśāvalī (VK). The VK was discovered by Petech in 1956 in the private library of the late Field Marshal Kaisher Shamsher. A roman transliteration of this fragmentary chronicle was published by Petech (1958).[1] The facsimile plates and a Devanāgarī transcription of the VK were published in Vajrācārya and Malla (1985).[2] The VK is a fragmentary *thyāsaphū*-manuscript, badly damaged on the left-hand top corner. Its beginning and end portions are both missing. As the surviving 8 folios are not numbered, it has not been possible to decide how much of the text at the beginning and how much at the end are missing. Petech thought that the VK stops with the year NS 469/AD 1349 'in which it apparently was written'.[3] Since its discovery, scholars have found it a useful source material, substantively dependable particularly for the late Thakuris and the Early Mallas.

The manuscript recently discovered (*Nepālavamśāvalī*, VN) in the National Archives is an important find for the students of traditional

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1 Petech, 1958, pp. 213-217.
2 Vajrācārya and Malla, 1985, pp. 205-222.
3 Petech, 1985, p. 8.

historiography in Nepal. As the VN is a complete text of which the VK is only a fragment (Folio 7A- Folio 11A), the new manuscript is a documentary evidence of those sections of the VK which have not yet been located. The identity of the VK fragment and Folio 7A-Folio 11A of the VN is almost absolute—'almost' because there are orthographic variants and a remarkably few variants in regnal years for historical kings. Even the missing syllable, as in Folio 8A line 8 *śrī va* for *śrī śiva* is the same in both the manuscript; even the wrong date. Samvat 267, as in Folio 9A line 1 for 287 is the same in both the texts. There are only two variants in dates. The VK has 26 for (Rudra) deva; the VN has 27 (Folio 7A:1); the VK gives the impossible 546 as the year of Rudramalla's death; the VN has the correct 446 (Folio 10A:5). Where the VK uses śudi, the VN uses śukla (Folio 9A:6); where the VK uses aṅgāvāra, the VN uses bhauma (vara) (Folio 9A:6); where the VK uses Kṛṣṇa, the VN uses Vadi (Folio 10B:7). There is also an inadvertent repetition of Vāmdeva and Harṣadeva (Folio8A:2-3); the copyist of the VK makes no such mistakes. The VK is in the late Nepālākṣara, the VN is in Devanāgarī with some traces of Newari survivals. As most of the older *vaṃśāvalīs*, the VN is in hybrid Sanskrit, or what the purist would call 'barbarous Sanskrit'.

Vajrācārya had discovered a 6-folio folded *vaṃśāvalī* manuscript in Gorkha. He published the text and its Nepali translation in 1977. The manuscript (*Gopālarājavmśāvalī,* VG) is reproduced in Vajrācārya and Malla (1985).[4] The VG is an abridged version of the VN. The abridgement, however, is very drastic. Only the names and regnal years of kings are retained while all their pious deeds, gifts, and religious activities have been pruned. The VG is, therefore, less detailed, severely edited—almost only one third in length and contents. In the preserved portions the VG, the VK and the VN are identical. So, all the three texts may have had a common origin.

The VN is a manuscript consisting of 13 folios in all, written on ordinary yellow Nepalese paper, 22.5x9 cm in size, 6 to 8 lines per page, now preserved in the National Archives, Catalogue II No. 96, Itihāsa 311, Microfilm No. A319/10. As the VK is incomplete and damaged, the VN is an important text to complement as well as restore the VK. Even otherwise, its importance on its own cannot be over-emphasised. As its critical study and edition are in progress only a few preliminary points

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4 Vajrācārya and Malla, 1985, pp. 223-228.

will be stressed in the following sections. Almost all the modern chronicles wax eloquent on Mānadeva I and identify him with the legendary Vikramāditya who founded the Vikrama Era. This tradition is ignored and not recorded by the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī* (V1). On the other hand, the V1 records the legend of patricide (folio 20B:4-21A:2). Unlike the V1, the VN records Mānadeva's association with Svayambhū caitya; the V1 records his foundation of a big caitya in Gum Vihāra. The VN and the modern chronicles explicitly call Mānadeva 'an adopted son, not born in the family'. The entry on Mānadeva in the VN is closer to the modern chronicles than to the V1. As the two traditions diverge so widely, we would like to quote the passages in our free English translation:

> His son was Mānadeva; 41 years. He killed his father unwittingly. As he had committed such a monstrous crime, he wandered crying (in consternation). On reaching the hillock of Gumvihāra he observed penances. By the merit of these penances, a great caitya emerged (on the hillock). He consecrated the caitya. He founded Mānavihāra after his name. There he consecrated (the temple of ?) śrī Māneśvarīdevī. He regulated the system relating to land-measurement and land rent, etc. (V1:20B-21A)

> Thereafter, śrī Mānadeva, who was an adopted son not born in the family, became the king, 39 years. He had a vision of Svayambhū caitya bhaṭṭāraka (in his dream?). He founded Mānavihāra. He built the capital city and the palace Mānagṛiha, with seven courtyards/storeys and two oblong ponds...surrounded on all four sides with...He became the sovereign of Nepal. Inside Mānagṛiha he constructed a temple for the God which had been excavated with gold The King's wife Bhoginī emmolated herself on the funeral pyre of the King. In Mānavihāra, the copper-plate roof he had built earlier was enlarged, and the land endowments of the monastery, too, were increased. He himself founded/initiated the use of a new epoch era. (VN folio 5A-5B)

The substantial divergence of the two extracts seems to indicate that different elaborate versions of ancient *vaṃśāvalīs* were in circulation until recently and that the modern chronicles compiled in the 19th century may have had access to these older texts. This hypothesis, postulated in our introduction to the facsimile edition of the

Gopālarājavamśāvalī, is at least fortified, if not yet fully proved, by the VN.

To give one more example of the importance of the new manuscript, the identity of Devaladevī—the pivotal figure in the politics of Nepāla-Maṇḍala in the second quarter of the 14th century—has remained an enigma. Although we know from the V1 and the VK that Devaladevī was the mother of Jagatasiṃha and paternal grandmother of Rājalladevī, we have no authentic document to show that Devaladevī was Harisiṃhadeva's wife, nor any to show that Jagatasiṃha was Harisiṃhadeva's son. The only document of any sort was 'a noting in a Caṇḍi manuscript' Mohan Khanal claims to have found in Dolakhā.[5] The veracity of this text is impossible to scrutinise as Khanal did not publish any facsimile nor any other details pertaining to the manuscript location. Purely on circumstantial evidence, scholars have by now taken it for granted that Devaldevī was Harisiṃhadeva's wife and that Jagatasiṃha was their son. In one entry in V1 Jagatasiṃhadeva is refered to as *Karṇāṭavaṃśaja* (Folio 28A:1); in another entry he is referred to as *Tirahutiyā* (Folio 49B:1). The VN/VK, too, refers to him as *Karṇāṭavaṃśaja* (Folio 10B:3). These references conclusively prove his Karṇāṭa origin. Yet, we still do not have any firm evidence to prove that his mother, Devaladevī, was Harisiṃhadeva's wife and that Jagatasiṃha was Harisiṃhadeva's son. Note that not a single of the modern vamśāvalīs mention Jagtasiṃha as Harasiṃhadeva's son, nor do the Maithil traditions. No Malla genealogy mentions him either, though they do mention his daughter, Rājalladevī.

We know from an entry in the V1 (folio 46A:4-46B:1) that in January 1326 Harisiṃhadeva and his family entered Rājagāma as political refugees and that the Maithil king died on the way, whereas his family, including his son, was brought in confinement. They asked for asylum in Nepal. Neither Devaladevī nor Jagatasiṃhadeva is mentioned by name in this entry in the chronicle. On the evidence of the VN, we are now in a position to explain why the refugee party entered Nepal in the first place. Devaladevī, the mysterious but powerful lady who was at the helm of state affairs between AD 1326 and 1366, is mentioned in the VN (folio 10A:6-7) as Padumaladevī's daughter (i.e., the young and energetic king-maker Rudramalla's sister). Together with her mother

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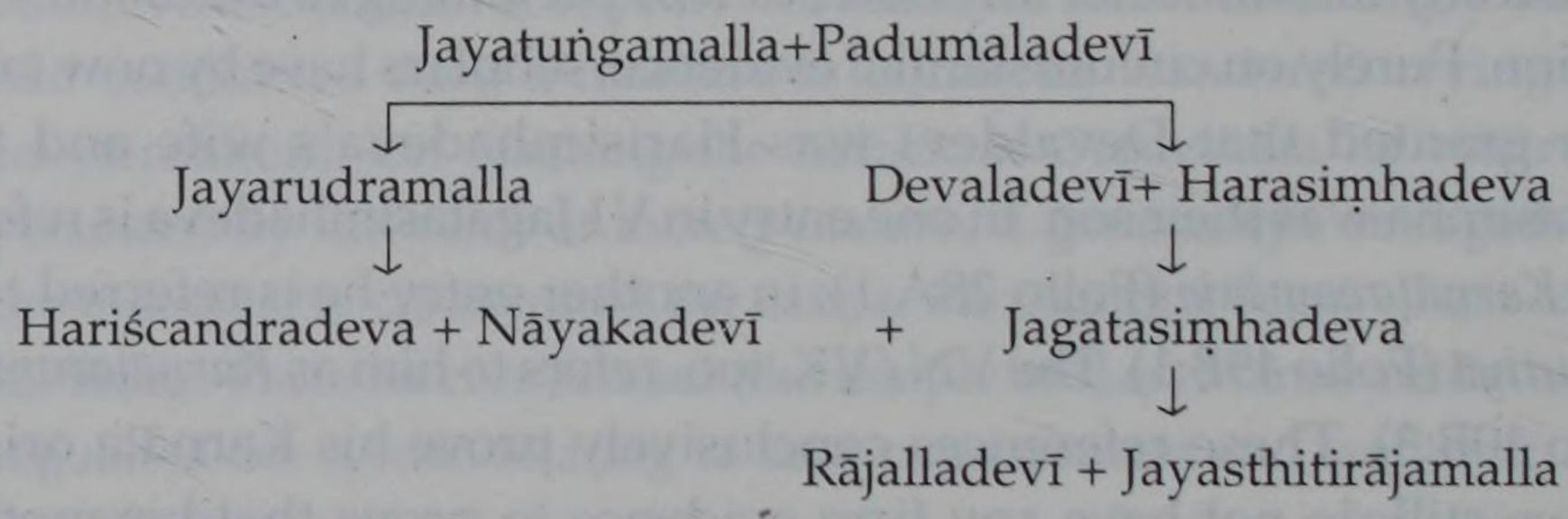
5 Khanal, 1970, p. 46.

Padumaladevi, Devaladevī became a co-regent for the new-born orphan Nāyakadevi, the daughter of Rudramalla. The throne of Nepal was occupied at that time by Rudramalla's relative and puppet, Jayarimalla (1320-1344), who ruled from Devapṭtan as a nominal king. Thus, if Devaladevī played a key political role it is because of her social status as a member of the Nepalese Royalty. Without any social connections with the local nobility, this would otherwise have been an impossibility in any society, much less in the Nepalese society—and that too for a refugee widow.

If Devaladevī was Padumaladevī's daughter, then we are compelled to raise vexing questions, which will be obvious by looking at the following family tree:



Did Jagatasiṃhadeva, then, cohabit with his cross-cousin Nāyakadevī, i.e., his maternal uncle, Rudramalla's daughter? Note that Nāyakadevi's first legal marriage was with Hariścandradeva; she was a widow and an unwed wife of Jagatasiṃha. Could it be for this 'incestuous(?)' relationship that Jagatasiṃha was thrown into prison (V1:28:5)? The chronicles are silent about his final end.

Whoever Devaldevī's husband was, he certainly was not Rudramalla, as suggested by some Nepali historians.[6]

If Harasiṃhadeva was the husband of Devaladevī, his flight to Nepal is understandable. Devalagdevī's meteoric rise in 1326 is equally understandable because from her parents' side she was a member of Bhaktapur Royalty, sharing the co-regency with her mother Padumaladevī for the minor Nayakadevī.

The cryptic and fumbling details of the mediaeval chronicles at this point in the narrative (AD 1326-1347) and the beginning of the deliberate falsification of social-political history by the later Mallas have to be

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6 Regmi, 1965, pp. 300-303.

sought here and at this point in time. At any rate, the VN clearly states that Devaladevī was Padumaldevī's daughter. The importance of the VN is, thus, obvious for the student of Nepal's mediaeval history. Petech refers to a 'well-known law in historiography, the highly authoritative VB (*Gopālarājavamśāvalī*) soon gave origin to abridgements or compendia'.[7] The VN, the VK, the VG and Kirkpatrick's king-list—all are certainly 'abridgements' of one kind or another, but they are not the abridgement of the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī* only. There were probably similar ancient texts upon which these pruned versions were based. Besides, the VN is not only an abridgement—whatever its original—but also an updated text. Perhaps because the updating had to be done continuously, the older versions were edited, abridged and pruned. At least the VN has passed through different editing and updating phases. The first transformation of the text appears to have taken place in the late 1320s-1340s when rival parties were contending for power in the Nepal Valley. This phase appears to have ended with the rise of Sthitirājamalla (AD 1382-1395). The next phase was during the later Malla period when the descendants of Sthitirājamalla were keen to demonstrate their Karṇāṭa origins. The Folios 11 and 12 certainly belong to this phase of the evolution of the text. The final phase is, of course, the Shah period. Right up to the end of the Malla period the text uses Nepāla Saṃvat; then it switches over to śaka Era, while only the last two dates of Raṇa Bahādur Shāha are given in the Vikrama Era.

The text lists only the Malla kings of Bhaktapur—ignoring the Kathmandu and Patan lines. Although the earlier portions of the text were certainly much older in origin, there is little doubt that the VN (as well as the VK and VG) in its modern form was written in Bhaktapur, probably during the reign of Jagjyotimalla (AD 1613-1637) or even later. It was updated during the reign of Raṇa Bahādur Shāha, who may have commissioned the present copy. As the critical edition of the VN is planned for the near future, we present here only a preliminary and free English translation. The folio-synopsis of the text is as follows:

Folio 1A - 1B	the advent of Paśupati; the Gopālas; the Mahīṣapālas; the Kirātas
Folio 2A	the Kirātas (continued)

7 Petech 1984:&.

Folio 2B - 3A	the origin of the Solar Dynasty
Folio 3B - 4B	the early Licchavis
Folio 5A - 6B	the Licchavis and the Guptas
Folio 7A - 9B	the Thakuris
Folio 9A - 11A	the Early Mallas
Folio 12A - 13A	the Shāhas

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English Translation of the *Nepālavamśāvalī* (VN)

(Folio 1A) Salutation to Lord Gaṇapati, Salutation to Lord Paśupati! In course of time, with the advent of the Kali Yuga, mighty kings, whose feet were decorated with the garland of crowns of all (lesser) kings, began to rule the earth, Situated in the middle of the Himalayan range, in the land originally covered with a dense forest, Lord Bhṛṅgāreśvara Bhaṭṭāraka emerged. Gautam and other sages founded Gautameśvara and other shrines. At that time/thereafter Lord Bhṛṅgāreśvara Bhaṭṭāraka was roaming about the śleṣmāntaka forest. There was then a cowherd named Nepa. His brown cow visited daily the bank of the river Vāgvatī to worship at a particular spot with streaming milk. Lord Paśupati emerged from the spot where the cow worshiped by shedding her milk. Lord Paśupati was erected/founded on the spot by Nepa the cowherd. Thereafter the Kings of the Gopāla dynasty ruled one after another. Among them the first was śrī Bhunmaga, 84 years; King śrī Jayagupta, 73 years and 3 months; Kings śrī Para (ma) gupta

(Folio 1B) 91 years; King śrī Harṣagupta, 67 years; King śrī Bhīmagupta, 38 years; King śrī Maṇigupta, 37 years; King śrī Viṣṇugupta, 46 years; King śrī Jayagupta, 71 years and 1 month. These eight kings of the Gopāla dynasty ruled (the country). Then after defeating the Gopāla Kings, the Kings of the Mahī(ṣa)pāla dynasty ruled the country. King śrī Varasiṃha, 49 years; King śrī Jayasiṃha, 21 years and 7 months; King śrī Bhavasiṃha, 41 years. These were the Gopala and the Mahīśapāla Kings. Then the Kings of the Kirāta dynasty ruled the land. King śrī Elaṃ, 90 years; King śrī Paṃmi, 79 years and 3 months; King śrī Dhaskaṃ, 37 years; King śrī Valaṃca, 31 years and 6 months; King śrī Hṛnti, 41 years and 1 month; King śrī Humatti, 50 years; King śrī Tuska, 41 years and 8 months; King śrī Srupastha, 38 years

(Folio 2A) and 6 months; King śrī Parva, 46 years; King śrī Jityadāstī, 60 years; King śrī Paṃcyaṃ, 71 years; King śrī Kyaṃkyaṃkyaṃkyaṃ, 56 years; King śrī Svananda, 50 years and 8 months; King śrī Sthumko, 58 years; King śrī Gighṛ, 60 years and 6 months; King śrī Janya, 73 years and 2 months; King śrī Luke, 60 years and 1 month; King śrī Thora, 71 years: King śrī Thoṃkvo, 83 years; King śrī Charmma, 73 years and 6 months; King śrī Gujaṃ; 72 years and 2 months; King śrī Puskaṃ, 81 years; King śrī Tyasnu, 56 years; King śrī Sugmaṃ, 58 years; King śrī Sasa, 63 years;

King śrī Guṇam, 74 years; King śrī Khimnu, 74 years; King śrī Galijaṃ, 81 years. These were the Kirāta Kings. In the meantime, the origin of the Sun-kings is given: At the end of the aeon,

(Folio 2B) Brahmā emerged from the lotus which sprouted from the navel of Lord Viṣṇu. Marīci's was Brahmā's son. Kaśyapa was Marīci's son. Sūrya was Kaśyapa's son. Manu was Sūrya's son. Manu's son was Kākutstha. Veṇu was Kākuistha's son. Puṣya was Veṇu's son. Ananya was Puṣya's son; Ananya's son was Pṛthu; Pṛthu's son was Triśaṅkara; Dhuṃdhimāra was Triśaṅkara's son; Pavanāśva was Dhumdhimāra's son; Maṃdhāta was Pavanāśva's son; Susaṃdhi was Maṃdhata's son: Dhṛtisaṃdhī was Susaṃdhi's son; Bharata was Dhṛtisaṃdhī's son; Asita was Bharata's son; Sagara was Asita's son; Asaṃaṃja was Sagara's son; Aṃśumana was Asaṃaṃja's son; Dilīpa was Aṃśumana's son; Bhagīratha was Dilīpa's son: Kakustha was Bhagīratha's son; Raghu was Kakutstha's son; Kalmāṣapāda

(Folio 3A) was Raghu's son; Kalmāṣapāda's son was Saṃkhaṅ's; Saṃkhaṅ's son was Samudrasena; Samudrasena's son was Agnivarṇa; Agnivarṇa's son was śrīgarga; śrīgarga's son was Paśusṛuta; Paśusṛuta's son was Ambarīṣa; Ambarīṣa's son was Nahuṣa; Nahuṣa's son was Canābhāga; Canābhāga's son was Ajā; Ajā's son was Daśaratha; Daśaratha's son was Rāma; Rāma's sons were Lava and Kuśa; Lava's son came in the same line. These were the kings who ruled Ayodhyā. Then in the line of Ikśvāku, Viśāla was born. Hemacandra was Viśāla's son; Hemacandra's son was Sucandra; Dhumā (Dhumasva?) was Sucandra's son; Sṛṃjaya was Dhumā's son; Suvarṇakhanī was Sṛṃjaya's son; Kṛsāśva was Survarṇakhanī's son; Somadatta was Kṛsāśva's son; Janmejaya was (born in the line of) the son of Somadatta; Pramiti was Janmejaya's son.

(Folio 3B) Pramiti's son was Matiman. These kings who descended from Sūrya ruled Vimānanagarī. Then the Kirātas entered Nepal: they were (again) vanquished by the descendants of the line of the Sun-Kings. King śrī Nimīṣitaṃkala, 50 years; King śrī Matārātra 91 years; King śrī KākavarmSā, 76 years; King śrī ṣaṣṭouspadeva, 56 years; he introduced the four *varṇa* system (the caste system) in Nepal. He put up a roof over the temple of śrī Paśupati bhaṭṭāraka and beautified it. (He enforced all

the laws of the State, and ruled over his subjects with justice—reconstructed on the basis of V1—Author.) He also initiated the use of an era or calendar. King śrī BhāskaravarmSā, 74 years. The King received a boon/blessing from Paśupati bhaṭṭāraka. As a result, he conquered the city of Kāṃcananagara, right up to the southern sea. From there he brought rare jewels, gold and golden ornaments

(Folio 4A) all of which were offered to śrī Paśupati bhaṭṭāraka. King śrī Bhūmivarmā, 41 years; King śrī Candravarmā, 21 years; King śrī Jayavarmā, 62 years; King śrī Varṣavarmā, 57 years; King śrī Sarvavarmā, 40 years; King śrī Prthvīvarmā, 56 years; King śrī Jyeṣṭhavarmā, 48 years; King śrī Kuberavarmā, 64 years; King śrī Harivarmā, 76 years; King śrī Siddhīvarmā, 61 years; King śrī Haridattavarmā, 29 years; he completed the temples of four Viṣṇu bhaṭṭārakas, situated in the four hillocks. King śrī Vasudatta, 33 years; King śrī Siripatavarmā, 3 years; King śrī Vṛddhīvarmā, 77 years; King śrī Vasantadeva 61 years;

(from Folio 4A line 6 to Folio 4B line 7 the copyist has repeated the king-list once again, beginning from śrī Puṣpadeva to śrī Vasantadeva; the repeated lines have been left out in the translation—Author) King śrī Sivadeva, 57 years;

(Folio 5A) King śrī Vṛṣadeva, 57 years. He founded the great Sāṃgu caitya (Svayambhū). He also installed a trident on the northern side of the temple of śrī Pśsupati bhaṭṭāraka. King śrī Saṅkaradeva, 50 years; King śrī Dharmadeva, 51 years; he commissioned the big south-facing pedestal with a bull on the top at the shrine of Paśupati. He also founded the caitya bhaṭṭāraka of Dasana (V1: 21a:3 has *dhamare cetya bhaṭārike*—Author). Thereafter, śrī Mānadeva, who was an adopted son not born in the family, became the king, 39 years. He had a vision of Svayambhū caitya bhaṭṭāraka (in his dream?). He founded Mānavihara. He built the capital city and the palace Mānagṛiha, with seven courtyards/storeys and two oblong lakes/ponds... ... ... surrounded on all four sides with ... ... He became the sovereign of Nepal. Inside Mānagṛiha

(Folio 5B) he constructed a temple for God which had been excavated with gold/for the God ... . The King's wife, Bhoginī, emmolated herself

on the funeral pyre of the King. In Mānavihāra, the copper-plate roof he had built earlier was enlarged, and the land endowments of the monastery, too, were increased. He himself founded/initiated the use of a new epoch era. King śrī Mahīdeva, 51 years; King śrī Vasantdeva, 56 years; King śrī Udayadeva, 47 years; King śrī Mānadeva, 4 years. During his reign there was drought for three years. In order to bring rains, he offered a gift of jewels to śrī Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka. King Sunakāmadeva, 50 years; King śrī Sivadeva, 41 years and 6 months. He founded the Kudvam Vihara Caitya. King śrī Narendradeva, 34 years; he offered śrī Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka a gift consisting of several precious jewels. At the same shrine, he also constructed a gilded water-conduit, a royal palace (Tripura)

(Folio 6A) and a golden orb/halo(?). King śrī Bhīmadeva, 16 years. Thereafter, defeating the Sun-Kings, the Kings of the Gopāla dynasty ruled over Nepal again. King śrī Viṣṇugupta, 74 years. He built a temple to śrī Tina(la)pāla Visnu bhaṭṭāraka and decorated it with a gilded roof. King śrī Viṣṇugupt, 61 years. He constructed a big stone-image of Viṣṇu bhaṭṭārakeśvara by the river at Paśupati. After this he consecrated several images of Viṣṇu. He also popularised the Gouri (Gauḍīya?) Nāgarī script in Nepal. King śrī Bhūmigupta, 45 years. Thereafter, the Kings of the Solar Dynasty ruled again. King śrī Sivadeva, 41 years; his sister's son, King Aṃśuvarmā, 43 years. He popularised the Aṃśuvarrnā script. He also brought into use the lump assessment of land rent on the entire village-basis(?). He also composed a treatise on the science of grammar.

(Folio 6B) His son śrī Mānavarma(?). Thereafter, the King of Gauḍa (Bengal) came to found Nepāla Vihāra, 10 years. King śrī Kṛtavarmā, 18 years; King śrī Bhīmārjunadeva, 37 years; King śrī Nandadeva, 13 years; King śrī Sivadeva, 16 years; he offered śrī Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka an eight-petalled silver lotus. He also founded Deyīya Vihāra (V1:22b:5 has Nandisālā Vihāra—Author), 10 years; he also created endowments to make the monks happy and their education in the scriptures possible. King śrī Narendradeva, 37 years. With the help of Bandhudatta's magical powers he initiated the chariot-festival of Vunga bhaṭṭāraka in Lalitpaṭṭana. King śrī Baladeva, 17 years; King śrī śaṅkaradeva, 12 years; King śrī Vardhamānadeva, 16 years; King śrī śaṅkaradeva, 12 years; King śrī Bhīmārjunadeva , 16 years; King śrī Jayadeva 19 years; King śrī

Baladeva, 16 years: he donated a gift in his own flame to śrī Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka. Thereafter, he began to rule over Bhoṭa- maṇḍala (the Kingdom of Tibet).

(Folio 7A) King śrī Kendradeva, 27 years; again, his rule extended without difficulties up to the borders of Bhoṭa. King śrī Jayadeva, 49 years and 11 months; King śrī Baladeva, 11 years; King śrī Balārjunadeva, 36 years and 7 months. In the company of his brother and his wife, he offered his crown to Vunga bhaṭṭāraka. King śrī Mānadeya, 36 years. He erected the big palace on the banks of the river Balakhu(?). King śrī Rāghavadeva, 63 years and 8 months. He founded the epoch-era at śrī Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka. King śrī śaṅkaradeva, 18 years and 6 months; King śrī Sahadeva, 33 years and 9 months; King śrī Vikramadeva, 1 year; King śrī Narendradeva, 1 year and 6 months; King śrī Gunakāmadeva, 85 years and 6 months; he offered śrī Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka eleven gifts. At the same shrine, at Iśāneśvara, Vāsuki bhaṭṭāraka's temple was constructed with a copper-plate roof. There a long rest-house was built together with a gilded water-conduit, he performed the *koṭi homa*.

(Folio 7B) King śrī Udayadeva, 6 years; King Nirbhayadeva, 5 years; King śrī Bhojadeva-Rudradeva, 9 years and 7 months; King Bhojadeva destroyed the *maṇḍapikā* (a small public assembly-hall?). King śrī Lakṣmīkāmadeva, 21 years; he performed propitiatory rites to bring peace to the nation in the year...; King śrī Jayadeva, 20 years. He ruled the half kingdom of Lalitapura for 10 years; King śrī Bhāskaradeva-Jayadeva, joint rule, 7 years and 4 months. He (Bhāskaradeva) sold the crown of his father. The golden image of Manohara (Mahottara, in the text) bhaṭṭāraka was also destroyed by him. He became blind because of these ignoble deeds. King (śrī) Baladeva, 12 years. He brought affluence to the nation. He built Haripura in Vajraratha. King śrī Padmadeva, 6 years. He built or commissioned a new crown. King śrī Nagārjunadeva, 3 years; King śrī śaṅkaradeva, 17 years. He consecrated the śaṅkareśvara bhaṭṭāraka at Nandisālā and completed a temple over it.

(Folio 8A) He maintained peace in the nation. He constructed a monastery and founded the temple of Bhagavatī manohara bhaṭṭāraka. King śrī Vāmadeva, 3 years; King śrī Harsadeva, 16 years; he ruled till the year 219; King śrī Sivadeva, 27 years and 7 months. He covered the

temple of Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka with a gilded roof. He built embankments along the river Baladevī (Balkhu?) in Kīrtibhaktagrama (Kīrtipur), and water-conduits and ponds for the good of his people. He built a five--storeyed royal palace with four courtyards. He donated a new silver lotus to Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka. In the past, (silver) *dramma* was not in use; gold/pieces of gold were used as *rakttikā* or coins. śrī Sivadeva brought into use the silver *dramma* minted with his name 'śrī Simha' and the gold *Sivakā* inscribed with 'śrī śiva'.

(Folio 8B) The eastern śikharanārāyaṇa (Cāṅgu) was repaired, including the other attendant deities in the shrine. King śrī Indradeva, 12 years; King śrī Mānadeva, 4 years and 7 months; King śrī Narendradeva, 6 years and 4 months. On the auspicious day of Monday, Pratipadā, Māgha Kṛṣṇa, N.S. 267 (King śrī ānandadeva) was crowned. He ruled the whole Nepāla Maṇḍala, protected his subjects from ruin, removed their sufferings. King śrī ānandadeva, who was endowed with several virtues, built(?) according to the precepts of the scriptures. He built two temples at śivagala tola (Bhaktapur). He built the capital-city together with the Tripura Palace. Close to the Palace he dug a gilded water-conduit. He allowed real estate transactions by the King, his Ministers as well as the commoners, which remained valid for generations. He ameliorated their sufferings, played the role of a great reformer by destroying all the mischief-makers in the kingdom. He wrote/commissioned the play *Sudhanapāla* to be played on Fridays. King śrī (A)nandadeva,

(Folio 9A) 20 years. On Friday, Pauṣa Kṛṣṇa 13, Saṃvat 267 (scribal error for 287—Author), King śrī Rudradeva was crowned. There was a heavy snowfall during the coronation. King śrī Rudradeva, 80 years and 1 month; King śrī Amṛtadeva, 3 years and 11 months. There was a big famine during his rule. King śrī Someśvaradeva was crowned on Friday, Kārttika Kṛṣṇa 6, Saṃvat 299. King Someśvaradeva ruled for 6 years and 3 months. Crown Prince Mahīndradeva's pious deed, Mahendrasarovara was completed on Vaiśākha śukla 15, Saṃvat 239. On Tuesday, Pauṣa śukla 7, Saṃvat 305, King śrī Guṇakāmadeva was crowned. King śrī Vijayakāmadeva,...years...months (VK has 6 years and 7 months; VG has 50 years and 7 months, but there are no figures in this text—Author). King śrī Arimalladeva, 31 years and 9 months. During his reign an epidemic known as *maraka* visited the land and a *dramma*

bought two *kuruwās* of grains only. King śrī Abhayamalladeva, 48 years and 2 months.

(Folio 9B) His rule witnessed famine, drought and earthquake, terminating in the death of the King. On Monday, Punarvasu nakṣatra, āṣāḍha śukla 2, Saṃvat 375, King śrī Jayadeva was crowned; he ruled for 2 years and 7 months; King śrī Anantamalladeva, 32 years and 10 months. He performed the ceremony of *dhvajārohaṇa* at Paśupat bhaṭṭāraka and offered a *mekhalā* (a chain) at the shrine. During the misrule of this king, the mischievious Kumāravana(?) destroyed Bhaktapura. Saṃvat 408, in the month of Pauṣa, Jayatāri entered the Valley for the first time. The Khaśiyās entered the Valley for the second time in the month of Phālguṇa, Saṃvat 414. In the month of Māgha, Samvat 411, the Tirahutiyās entered Bhaktagrama. In Māgha, Saṃvat 413, the Tirahutiyās entered Lalitagrāma. The country/nation was in great distress; the invaders extorted ransom; ministers and courtiers suffered in confinement The temple of Someśvaranimam (Svanima in Patan?) was the pious deed of Princess Viramādevī; she also performed the ceremony of *dhvajārohaṇa* at the temple of Cāṅgu

(Folio 10A) and consecrated the temple of Indrakūṭa after the ceremony of *dhvajārohaṇa* was performed. Viramādevī was Jayaśaktideva's mother. Thereafter, under the influence of śrī Jayarudramalladeva, son of Jayatuṅgamalla, his own relative śrī Jayarimalla was crowned as the King though he was given nominal powers only. The whole of Nepal, including Navakoṣṭha (Nuwakot) was actually ruled by Jayarudramalla himself. He sold much land in Bhaktagrāma. Jayarudramalla died on Saṃvat 446 āṣāḍha Pūrṇimā (VK 546, an impossible date—Author); four wives burnt themselves on his pyre. His son had died after some days of birth. His daughter, Nāyakadevī, was brought up by her paternal grandmother śrī Padumaladevī and her daughter Devaladevī who jointly ruled over Bhaktagrāma (as regents?). They constructed maṇḍapas and water conduits at Tilamādhavasthāna (in Bhaktapur). Thereafter, ādityamalla entered the Nepal Valley. In Saṃvat 448 Caitra śukla Pūrṇimā

(Folio 10B) Uttara Phālguṇī Nakssatra, Friday, Lalitagrāma was besieged. After this, with the arrival of Hariścandradeva of the Soma Dynasty of

Kāśī, śrī Nāyakadevī was given in marriage to him. He died of poisoning by courtiers some years later. Several ministers and courtiers respected/ recognised Nāyakadevi (as a legitimate claimant to the throne?). Thereafter, śrī Jagatasiṃhadeva of Karṇāṭa Dynasty took her as an unwed wife. A daughter, named śrī Rājalladevī was born of this union. However, ten days after her birth, the mother (Nāyakadevi) passed away. The paternal grandmother, śrī Devaladevī, brought her up with a great deal of suffering. The child managed to survive and grow up(?). Thereafter, śrī Paśupatmalla (the pretender to the throne?) was put in confinement. The whole of Nepal, both the Royal Houses and their courtiers assembled to come to an agreement on succession to the throne. In Saṃvat 464 (467?), śrāvaṇa Kṛṣṇa 4, śrī Jaya(rāja)deva was made the King with common consent. On Vaiśākha ukla 7,467, (śrī Jayārjunadeva, the son of śrī Jayārjunadeva and his wife śrī Rudramādevī, was born—reconstructed on the basis of V1:28b:2-3—Author). śrī Jayarājadeva's father was śrī Jayānandadeva and mother was a daughter of Rajendrapāla, a feudatory of Uttara Vihāra (Patan). Jayarājadeva's wife was

(Folio 11A) named śrī Rudramalladeva of the Karnata Dynasty (V1:28b:2-3 has *śrī Jayarājadevasya patni śrī Rudramādevīsa tasya putra śrī Jayārjunadeva jata*—the deliberate falsification of mediaeval history appears to have begun at *this* point where the narrative fumbles and makes a total nonsense of the V1—Author). His son śrī... at this time the two Royal Houses were united. In Saṃvat 468 śrī Devaladevī offered a gift at Paśupati. In Saṃvat 469 śrī Jayarājadeva offered a gift at śrī Paśupatī. Thereafter the Sultān of the East came. Now the chronicle begins. In śaka Saṃvat 1019, śrāvaṇa śukla Dvitīyā, Saturday, Svasti nakṣatra, Ripumarda lagna, King śrī Nānyadeva founded the Kingdom (of Tirahuta or Tribhukti at Simarāvanagadha). The founder of the Kingdom, Nānyadeva was succeeded by śrī Gaṅgādeva. His son Narasimhadeva succeeded him. śrī Narasimhadeva was succeeded by śrī Rāmasimha. His son, Bhavasimha, succeeded him. Bhavasimha was succeeded by śrī Karmasimha. His son, Harasiṃhadeva, the jewel of the Karṇāṭa Kings, succeeded him. In śaka 1245 (scribal error for 1247?) on Saturday, Pauṣa śukla Navamī,

(Folio 11B) due to misfortune Harasiṃhadeva left his capital and entered the mountains. As the moon is born of the sea, Vallalsiṃha was born of

Harasiṃhadeva. The famous and noble King śrī Devamalla was born of Vallalsimha. From Devamalla was born śrī Nāgamalla. His son was the pious and noble Aśokamalla. śrī Jayasthitimalladeva was his son. King Jayayakṣamalla was born of him. He was noble and famous. His son was Rayamalla. His son was famous Bhuvanamalla. His son was the pious Prāṇamalla. His son was Viśvamalla. His son was Trailokyamalla. As the moon rises out of the sea, the rays/light out of the sun, śrī Jaggatjyotirmalla, a king as learned and pious as Karṇa or Arjuna

(Folio 12A) was born of Trailokyamalla. He was the best of all kings. His son was śrī Sumatijayajitāmitramalla. His son was śrī Bhūpatīndramalla. His son was śrī Raṇajītmalla who ruled for 48 years—upto the Seven Kosis. In old age, he went to live and die at Kāśī. In Nepāla Saṃvat 890 Kārttika śukla 11, the King of Gorkha entered Bhaktagrāmaùthe city with 12,000 houses. The Somavaṃśī King śrī 5 Prthvīnārāyaṇa Sāha Bahādura Samsera Jaṅgadeva conquered Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa, Lalitapattana and Bhaktapattana by defeating the three kings: śrī Raṇjitmalla, śrī Jayaprakaśamalla and śrī Tejanarasiṃhamalla. Then he ruled upto the seven Kosis and the Seven Gaṇḍakīs.

(Folio 128) He defeated several rulers and ruled over their territories. He lived for 52 years. He died on śaka 1696 Māgha Kṛṣṇa 10. After him, his son śrī Pratāpasiṃha Sāha Bahādura Samśera Jaṅgadeva became the king. He ruled for 2 years and 11 months. In śaka 1699, Mārgasīrṣa Kṛṣṇa 3, his son, śrī Raṇabahādura Sāha Bahādura śamśera Jaṅgadeva became the King. In the year śaka 1700 Māgha śukla 5, after defeating the feudatory śrī Harikumaradattasena of Trituṅga (Tanahun), he ruled up to the River Kāli Gaṇḍakī. In Samvat 1846, āṣāḍha śukla 15, the principality of Jumlā was conquered. Then in Saṃvat 1847, (AD 1790) Jājarkot, Thapālā, Dullu, Dailekha.

(Folio 13A) Achama, Doti, Kumāun, Garhawala śrīnagar, Haridvra, Gaṅgottari in the south, Badri, Kedāra in the north—all these territories/ principalities were conquered.

VIII

Religion and the Arts

Theravada Movement in Nepal: A Review of LeVine and Gellner

Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-century Nepal by Sarah LeVine and David N. Gellner; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2005; pp. 394; ISBN 13 978-0674019089.

Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-century Nepal is a collaborative study on a sub-culture and its genesis in contemporary Nepal. Both scholars are familiar with the society, its culture and religion, i.e., the milieu they investigate, and they have used the available repertoire of ethnography, including hermeneutics of social portraits of the chief actors of the Movement. What is amiss is the agenda, a programme of action or reform, a kind of structural design and cost estimate in terms of activities and institutions, the regime to be built and re-built.

Defining the aim of the study, the authors write:

> Their aim was to 'produce a historically informed account of Buddhism among the Newars as it is being made and remade, one that does justice to the viewpoints of those involved, whether "big" people or "small" people, male or female, monastic or lay' (Preface, p. X).

It is, therefore, not the sub-title, but the title of the book where the problem lies. It suggests, in no uncertain terms, that Buddhism as it existed in Nepal till the 1930s was in a permanent state of disrepair, if not in a dilapidated doctrinaire state. Among other syndromes, the elite—who

had merely undergone a mock ritual of initiation as monks or Masters of the Vehicle—knew neither the Code (the Sanskrit language or its Twilight version), nor the Text (the Nine Scriptural Texts). The Monastery (*Bāhās* and *Bahīs*) had already been secular and domesticated at least for a millennium, most quarters converted into private properties. At times, even scriptural texts, such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajúāpāpāramitā* of Thaṃbahil, were physically split as personal property into two separate bundles, 'worshipped' and grudgingly recited once a year in turn by different families as an onerous obligation. The Masters of the Doctrine have all been thus sadly 'converted' into medicine men, or at best copyists, or 'manufacturers' who devoutly reproduced manuscripts without knowing what they contain.

Notwithstanding John K. Locke's claim that the Bahis housed 'celibate communities and novices', there is no hard or compelling evidence that the Monasteries in the historical Nepal ever housed communities of celibate monks. Hsuan Tsang's *Travel Accounts* cannot be trusted as he reproduced what he heard in the Indian plains or Nepal's tarai. The Pilgrim was not too reliable on numbers as he thought the size of the city of Vārāṇasī or Kapilavastu as well as of the Kingdom of Nepal were all equal!

The earliest attestation of such a Buddhist community in the Nepal Valley is that of the Mahāsāṅghikas, and the Bikkus and Bikkunis mentioned in the historical documents, such as later Licchavi inscriptions and early mediaeval colophons and palmleafs appear already domesticated with a sizeable family and disposable real estate and property of their own.

The Modernist/Protestant activists, therefore, have been on the lookout for historical 'villains', or 'anti-heroes' of the Movement. At least, in public discourse, in seminars and popular publications, the activists find the ādi Shaṅkarācārya (AD 788-828) or Sthitirājamalla (1382-1395) as convenient fanatics who 'forced the pristine monks and erstwhile priests' to disrobe, to desert the church, to marry and breed a progeny with uncertain social destiny.

So far so good. LeVine and Gellner's ethnography is spotlessly accurate in detail and enviable in their perception of social and cultural forces at work in setting the Movement in motion. The diagnostics of personalities in search of emotional release from social, albeit temporary psychological, or cultural stress have the cogency of hermeneutics. They

have undoubtedly assembled a trustworthy clinical report, fully sanitised with solid statistical 'facts'. However, the Theravada Movement makes 'historical sense' only if understood and analysed as a part of the social movements in the making in early 20th-century Nepal. There were several stirrings underway beneath an apparently calm and peaceful autocratic polity, of nearly three decades of Rana Chundra Shumsher's rule (1901-1929), the Theatre-State, if you like it.

Mādhav Rāj Jośi had launched an ārya Samāja at the turn of the century and verbally challenged the Hindu religious orthodoxy.[1] He was paraded with a bleeding head, physically manhandled by the court priests in the presence of the Prime Minister for arguing that the image of Pashupatinatha is merely a stone sculpture! The impact of this episode was so traumatic in the social and cultural life of the Kathmandu Valley that Leo E. Rose and Bhuvan Lal Joshi call it the beginning of the end of Hindu priestly orthodoxy—'the seminal influence which later sprouted into many social and political movements'.[2] The British Resident sent an enquiry—so shocked was he. He was expelled to India at the behest of the courtiers, pundits and the Rāj Purohit, Prayāg Raj Pāṇdey!

This gave rise to the Gandhian Tulsi Mehera Shrestha-Gyān Bahādur Newā's Carkhā Movement as well as to the so-called 'ādambara Mata' (the arrogant Sect), refusing to bow one's head before the Hindu pundits. It also gave the impetus to the Library Episode, leading to the mass arrests and public confession of several literary and cultural elites. The Rana family thought every organised civil activity as a threat to its supremacy, and a Monastic Order of Ordained Monks, not to speak of Nuns, would hardly have been palatable news for them. Their final expulsion from Nepal is none too unexpected.

As a sub-text of this social and cultural context the Theravāda Movement makes more sense than as a by-product of 'psychological release' or accidents, if you like, of Newar social life. The LeVine-Gellner study is focused, not so much on the Movement, as on the Theatre, on Actors/Actresses, rather than on any thread of action, on the agenda of reform, so that at the end of the day one feels as if the Movement is led, not

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1 See, *Shahidke Kalamse*, the Life of Maharṣī Mādhav Rāj Jośī by śukra Rāj and Chandra Kānta. Kathmandu: 2015, pp. 303-354 (in Hindi).

2 Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal: A Case Study of Political Acculturation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1966, p. 52.

only by intellectually lackadaisical leaders, but also without any concrete reform agenda. 'The Three Fundamental Practices of the Theravāda tradition', listed on page 65, are at best too commonplace. To celebrate the Baiśākha Pūrṇimā as Buddha Jayanti, or to have replaced *Paúcarakṣā* or Nāmasaṅgīti recitation by the *Tripiṭaka* texts, to have replaced the Samyaka Mahādāna with any less wasteful gifts-giving *dānapāramitā*,, or to have prayer sessions beginning with a *śila* prayer, instead of other Bahā *pujā pāthas*, *vratas*, *upoṣdhas* is not a total break with the past. To have a seated Buddha, a śakyamuni, an historical Siddhārtha of the Gautama lineage is still image-worship, a prayer for divine support, except that the Mahāyanists have too many divinities, too many Lokeśvaras, the Vajrayānists have too many ritualism, magic spells, too many Celestial Buddhas entwined in Mahāmudra with their over-excited consorts in divine orgasm. The Hereafter of the Promised land was already too crowded with 33 million Hindu Gods and Godlings!

The Newar Buddhist community has been in search of a social and cultural identity. Surrounded by a caste-ridden society, the monasteries have had a trying time under Hindu dynasties at least for the last millennium and a half. They were run as 'the Saṅgha' by families who merely inherited the names—the Vajra master, the śākya or śākya Bhikkus, not by personal, moral, or intellectual attainment, but by virtue of birth!

The Theravāda Movement is obviously confusing the lay community, if we go by Todd Lewis's field work, who are confused not only in their search for guidance here but also in search for a path to liberation hereafter so that there is an undeclared 'cold war' among the priests, contesting for the lay client. The enlightened few, like the well-off Júāna Jyoti-Maṇiharṣa Jyoti's solution to this 'war of paths', the conflict of interest, is to patronise all three—the Lāmā, the Bhikku, as well as the Master of the Thunderbolt. (See, Interview, in p. 108, with harsh comments on the *Gubhāju* as well as the monks running after 'bank-balance' and private property). So, is the Movement finally watered down, if it has not already fizzled out in a 'compromise solution'? Anyway, Nirvāṇa is not so easily at hand as it appeared in the melodies of the Júānamālā Bhajans.

That the Buddha's words are available in their unpolluted and pristine version is an equally arguable orthodoxy, promoted by the over-enthusiastic Pali Text Society, and through its Sri Lankan, Burmese and

Thai promoters of the Canon, dispensing various means of relief from the stress of modern secular life to the Buddhist laymen. As the extant *Tripiṭaka* texts were compiled centuries later by contending sects of elders, who were already divided in as many sects following the Buddha's cremation, their transmission had been, until the early centuries BC/AD, only through oral medium. It is only an article of faith and personal act of choice to subscribe to the *Dhammamapada* as 'more true to the Teachings of the Buddha' than the *Gūhyasāmajatantra* and other *anuttarayoga*—or Root tantras of the Mantrayāna/Vajrayāna schools.

The recruitment of the Anāgārikās—the homeless nuns—is not a modern innovation. The Masters of the Mahāmudra had so long been using the Gurumās in the *gurumaṇḍala* or gaṇackara magical sesssions and practices in the 'orthodox' Nālandā as well as in 'heterodox' Vikramaśila and Odantapuri monasteries where some of the latter-day 'Master Keepers of the Gate' such as the Mahāsiddhi Vāgeśvarakīrti were of Nepalese/Newar origin.

The 'Vihāras' founded since the Anandakuti in the 1940s/1950s have always been under critical public gaze just as they were under the political surveillance of the Rana espionage network. The more recent ones, supported by donor munificence in the Kathmandu Valley, too, had spells of legal dispute among the founding elders on property ownership rows, ending in the court-rooms. Thus, it is not just the Urāy-Bare 'caste disputes' of the 1930s, finally made up with the legal intervention of the Palace Secretariat in 1959, that punctuated the chequered social history of the religion.

Neither the Aristotelian logic of sociology, nor the Euclidean geometry of cultural anthropology of Buddhism in Nepal—modeled on the paradigm of the Roman Catholic Church contested by Protestantism and other 'Denominations'—is likely to unravel the challenges faced by the celibate monks/nuns residing in enclosed monasteries in an orthodox Hindu polity so deeply enmeshed in the social system where egregiousness of an unending cycle of rituals, seasonal feasts and festivities comprise the essentials of socialisation. There is no wonder if the *pravrajyā-samvara*—the ordination of the Monk or the *ācārya-abhiṣekha*—the consecration of the Master—are both reduced or simplified to mock rituals, now confused as secular life-crisis-*saṃskāra*, reinterpreted as *kayetāpūjā* by none other than Amritānanda—the great scholar-informant of Brian Hodgson in 1830.

Concluding the study, the final chapter of the book summarises 'the Nine-Point Achievements of the Theravāda Movement' as seen by poet Cittadhara half a century ago. To this list, Bhikhu Sudarśana added 'a further eight', making the unimpressive list of 17 attainments of the Movement (pp. 283-284). As Levine and Gellner find the Programme or the Agenda of their Dramatis Personae, not particularly moving or 'radical', they suggest the community, both the monks and the laymen, an alternative: the Sherpa model as studied by Sherry Ortner who found a 'deep contradiction in monasticism'. The Monastery has to survive as poor monks who are 'higher in status though lower in material terms', surviving on secular social as well as material support. The nuns have a further handicap due to 'negative ideology, constraining women generally'.

'At its origin, the Theravada movement in Nepal was indeed a revivalist, even a fundamentalist movement; however, what was being revived, or returned to, was not any particular doctrine, nor any form of meditation, but simply the practice of monasticism,' write LeVine and Gellner (p. 280).

A serious flaw in this study is its failure to explain what this monasticism consists of, particularly its opportunity costs. Equally unpromising is Todd Lewis's recipe for the future course 'to internationalise the Movement' as the Tibetans have done in the diaspora. This is so for three reasons. The Western world, including the US Administration, are hardly aware of any Buddhist movement in Nepal. Secondly, we do not have a Dalai Lama, and finally, thank heavens, we cannot afford a 'Government in Exile'.

Selected Papers on Art and Culture of Nepal: A Review of Slusser

Art and Culture of Nepal: Selected Papers by Mary Shepherd Slusser, with contributions by Gautam V. Vajracharya and Manuela Fuller; Mandala Publications, Kathmandu, 2005; pp. 635; 12 colour plates, maps, drawings, and black-and-white plates; Rs 7000; ISBN 99946-55-02-7.

The book is a collection of 17 papers on sculpture, painting and architecture, including minor arts published over a period of 25 years (1972-1996). As most of these stretch over decades, the latest as old as 14 years, 'it is evident that certain aspects are out of date' (Preface, p. v). The datedness of most papers is aggravated by the delay between planning (September 1997) and the actual date of release of the publication on 6 November 2005—to mark the author's 86th birthday.

Two attributes of the publication cannot escape any careful reader. The selection is from more than 50 short as well as long papers Slusser has published since she first fell in love with the arts and culture of the Kathmandu Valley following her exploratory walks in its streets, lanes, courtyards and monuments begun in the mid-1960s. Given the catholicity of her taste and interests, it covers a staggering range of subjects, from inkpots to monumental structures. Secondly, it is a work of someone who is not only interested in all forms of Nepali aesthetic expression but also hopelessly and deeply in love with her subject. Her infatuation with Nepal is complex and problematic. So much so that she is more of an admirer than a connoisseur or a cold detached critic trying to convince the reader of the aesthetic merit (rarely, if ever, of glaring demerits) of the

work she chooses to discuss, analyse, interpret and evaluate. We have to take her canons of aesthetics, whatever these be, for granted as soon as we agree to read a paper she chooses to write on.

This will be in striking contrast with her claim when she wrote:

> The papers included are less about art as an aesthetic experience than about art which for the most part plays, or played, an active role within the cultural milieu in which it was produced. That it can be validated by the cultural dimension of historical chronicles, inscriptions and the living culture is in my opinion what gives Nepalese art its special appeal and why I have spent three decades in its study. (Preface, p.vii)

With formal training and degrees in archaeology, anthropology and art history from such centres of excellence as Harvard, Columbia and New York, Slusser came to Nepal in 1965 to accompany her consort who held a diplomatic post. It hardly seemed to matter if her doctoral dissertation was on the archaeology of South America, and before coming to Nepal, she had published a work on Vietnam! A Research Associate at the Arthur M. Seckler Gallery and the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, she is evidently and eminently qualified to investigate 'the special appeal of Nepali art' against its cultural and historical context, particularly with 'intensive collaboration of stellar Sanskritists and historians of Nepal'. By all means, by training, profession as well as by chance and her station in life she is destined to study Nepali art forms in their social-cultural and historical context.

Sculpture

As it will not be possible to review all the 17 papers we will focus on the major ones on leading Nepali art forms only. Clearly, Slusser's primary interests in Nepal are its ancient and mediaeval sculpture and architecture. Her early papers (e.g., *Kathmandu: A Collection of Articles* [Kathmandu: American Women's Organization in Nepal, 1969]) were on the visual feasts for the tourist which a city like Kathmandu dispenses any inquisitive visitor who cares to stand and stare by its 'surface archaeology' as a museum without walls. She attempted at a systemic synthesis of her studies, in collaborative work in explorations in 'surface archaeology' in *Nepal Mandala* (Princeton, 1982). However, its major focus

was on the political chronology of a theatre-state playing out and investing heavily on a drama informed by classical Hinduism and Buddhism. Hypothetically, religion and the art forms were the primary stuff of which the cultural study was made. Yet, the whole focus was on an exercise to weave a strand of consistent narrative, or the grand narrative of Nepali political history pieced together from 'cultural data' contained in about 190 ancient inscriptions in Sanskrit, 120 early mediaeval ones in pseudo-Sanskrit, supplemented by a dozen temple/court diaries and a couple of chronicles in hybrid Sanskrit/Newari. Of course, there were also ubiquitous vernacular chronicles compiled between the reign of Bhimsen Thapa and Bir Shumsher in the late 1880s.

Some of the essays/papers in this volume are the by-products of Slusser's 'intensive collaboration with stellar Nepali historians' such as Mahesh Raj Pant and Gautam V. Vajracharya. 'Some Nepalese stone sculptures', 'Further Notes' and 'Nepali Sculptures: New Discoveries' are among the representative writings which exemplify her approach to the analysis and interpretation of Nepali masterpieces in the light of the Indian tradition of sculptural art. Not too familiar with the scripts or the languages, her access to supporting documentary evidence is facilitated by her colleagues. Except for some brief essays by Baburam Acharya, P.R. Sharma, R.N. Pandey and Ramesh Jung Thapa, there was nothing worthwhile by native scholars before Lain Singh Bangdel's *The Early Sculptures of Nepal* (Vikas: Delhi, 1982). Most students cited either Kramrisch's 1964 Asia Society Exhibition Catalogue, or N.R. Banerjee's brief monograph (1966), or Amita Ray's summary volume (1971) prior to Pal's influential dissertation, submitted to Cambridge in 1972 and published in two parts in 1974 and 1978 (not in 1973, nor in 3 volumes as Slusser lists).

The central article of Slusser's approach to Nepali sculpture is that ALL works in stone, wood or metal, *are* aesthetically meritorious and valuable, and as they *ought* to have a firm chronology, they are *ispo facto* datable, if not absolutely, at least relatively on 'stylistic considerations', on considerations such as anatomical/physiognomic features, facial expressions, hair-style, dress, ornaments, or presence or absence of diagnostic attributes. Such attributes (e.g., the size of the hips, fleshiness of the body or slenderness of the waist, or the nature of erotic curves, etc) are, however, hypothetical than real. Verifiable canons of iconography, such as the *Citrasūtra* of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* or the *Pratimālakṣaṇa*

or the *Rūpamaṇḍana*, are far and few between, and they are rarely, if ever, cited by Nepali sources. Neither the stone masons nor bronze-casters were literate. The documentary sources Slusser appeals to are the *vaṃśāvalīs*, inscriptions and local court/temple diaries. On their own each of these sources cannot be validated, since they are neither 'historical' nor reliable *unless* confirmed by other contemporary sources. On pp. 192-193, she has published a revealing table of the total corpus of 13 dated stone and 17 metal sculptures from Nepal belonging to the long span of seven centuries between AD 467 and 1167. Even when a work is dated and inscribed, the numerals or texts and readings are fiercely contested. The late Dhanavajra Vajrācārya read the inscribed repoussé plaque in the Jack Zimmerman Collection twice, and each time he came up with different texts! A classic example may be the so-called 'Purandi Hoard Piece' dated by Slusser to the 11th century, based on a dubious reading of a letter numeral as 1 whereas all paleographic evidence shows that it is 4. Thus, the hoard can only be dated to the late 14th century as there was no paramount ruler named Arjunadeva in the Kathmandu Valley in AD 1065.

Like in *Nepal Mandala*, Slusser has taken the Nepali publications of her stellar collaborators (rising epigraphists or Sanskritists they may be then, but in the 1960s they were not any art historians) as infallible words of authority in her analysis and interpretation of Nepali sculpture. Based on their reading of a passage in the late 14th-century chronicle (folio 21b), Slusser assigns a number of Nepali Viṣṇu sculptures to the brief reign of the ābhīra feudatory Viṣṇugupta who usurped political power from the *de jure* Licchavis and was assassinated later by Narendradeva in AD 643. Among his donations, or *kīrti*, are said to be the Jalaśayanī-nārāyaṇa, popularly known as 'Budhānīlakaṇṭha', the 'Bālanīlakaṇṭha' at 'Balaju', the Viṣṇu at the bank of Bāgmati, popularly identified as Rāma with two sons Lava and Kuśa, and the Caturmukha liṅga of Viṣṇu at the Parameśvara Praṇāli, or the Nārāyan Hiṭi. Before giving credence to the chronicle or its literal interpretation by her collaborators, Slusser should have questioned its authenticity on a number of details. For example, there was no dynastic overthrow, only a soft coup by the ābhīras, nor was there any Jīvagupta ruling 74 years before Viṣṇugupta. The big stone sculpture of Viṣṇu at the eastern banks of the river Bāgmati was NOT made to his image, as Slusser understands, but made according to the facial proportions of

the primary donor *(svātmapramāṇena)*—*a* common practice among munificent devotees (see the unfortunate legend, the so-called portrait of Viṣṇugupta in Fig. 3, opposite p. 91). The interpretation of the be-mustached Cāṅgu Garūḍa as 'an idealized portrait' of Mānadeva or the Hādigāun Garūḍa as an image of Anuparma Gupta seem to us 'touristic', if not the wildest flights of imagination. The identification of Parameśvara praṇāli with Nārāyan hiṭi is at best questionable as the later vernacular chronicles ascribe the foundation to King Dharmadeva, Mānadeva's father. So, the Caturmūrtti Viṣṇu liṅga or Samkarṣaṇa (Fig. 25), too, may not be of that age. However, Slusser's assessment of the Jalaśayin nārāyaṇa, together with Viṣṇuvikrānta and Dharaṇī Vārāha sculptures as 'outstanding achievements' in truly 'Nepali idiom' of sculpture, successfully assimilating classical Hindu mythical subjects and artistically localising the Gupta sculptural practice is fully documented and convincing. This has long been a part of received wisdom in our 'conventional art history'. The real breakthrough that she made was in her 'discoveries' of a tradition or traditions that went further back in time and praxis to the centuries earlier than the Licchavis' arrival on the scene. Although she firmly disputes a 'kirāta period or style' in Nepali sculpture (see p. 100, note 36), her paper on 'new discoveries' written in 1968-69, though published in 1972, is one of the earliest to focus on 'the puzzling group of images worshipped in the Kathmandu Valley' as 'śitalā' or simply Mother Goddess. This was a decade before Bangdel published his volume on early sculptures of Nepal. In part, these 'discoveries' are the result of her belief that 'Nepali art should not be viewed as merely provincial Indian' but as 'reinterpretation of Indian tradition into something quite distinctive' (p. 91). Her entire efforts in these papers went into an exploratory fieldwork to define this uniqueness that sets itself apart from the Indian tradition, i.e., Indian in tradition yet Nepali in expression and practice. The so-called 'smallpox goddesses' are the earliest of sculptures that have been found here, documenting a style or styles which are pre-Gupta in many of its formal features—such as massive buttocks, large ring anklets, heavy ear ornaments. Slusser sees a close affinity of these images with the Kuṣāṇa art of the 2nd century AD, its provenance being the art of Kṣatrapas of Mathurā. Although she says that this early paper was included in the volume 'largely to illustrate the undeveloped state of art historical research in the Kathmandu Valley as late as the 1970s'

later findings and publications confirm the existence of Kuṣāṇa influence in the history of Nepalese art (pp. 106-107).

The same impulse to push the upper limits of art history back by centuries informs the papers on metal and repoussé art forms. The dating of sculptures, stone as well as metal, was hitherto based on stylistic evidence about which opinions widely differed. The received wisdom was that Nepalese bronze sculpture could not be dated earlier than the 13th century. Piecing together various strands of evidence, documentary as well as sculptural, Slusser concludes,

> from the three inscribed images—two cast and one repoussé—we now know from the firm basis of epigraphy that the art of metallurgy flourished in Nepal at least as early as the sixth century AD. From the technical sophistication of the three images coupled with the inscribed testimony of the (Cāṇgu) Nārāyaṇa sheath, we can safely deduce that the Nepalese were master metalsmiths long before that time. (p. 166)

Though this statement is not contestable, several details which went into its structure are worth examination if not open to debate. The late Dhanavajra's translation of the inscribed text on the *kavaca* or the metal sheath as paraphrased in English on p. 161 is not accurate. For instance, the Sanskrit word *svasaṃsthayā* does not refer to the replacement of the sheath by Aṃśuvarman himself; it refers to the epoch-era begun in AD 576 by him by dropping the century figure. *Vartamane*, too, does not stand for 'at present' but for the 'current reckoning' as against 'expired reckoning' of any given calendar year. The accurate conversion in Julian calendar is, thus, February 4, 608, not AD 607. The testimony of the T'ang Annals on the opulence of Nepali court and its decorative metal crafts in itself speaks volumes for their antiquity as well as splendour.

Slusser brings all her intellectual resources to full play in the Purandi hoard paper. Though she fails to inform her readers if there was any cultural site or structure in Purandi, the site where the 'hoard' comes from, it is, undoubtedly, a masterpiece among her recent publications displaying her diligence in methodical analysis of all available and relevant data—except palaeography, a field out of her grip and expertise. The initial drift of the paper was to a clearly and closely argued approach to defining 'an emerging eleventh-century style in sculpture'. It was not that she was convinced of any intrinsic aesthetic merit of the hoard; she

was merely overwhelmed by the alleged antiquity of the hoard. By the end of the paper, the argument loses momentum as she comes to grips with stylistic details relating to 'shoddy pieces of workmanship' marked by 'a lack of conviction'. This comes as an unexpected conclusion. She does not even discuss why nearly all the images are seated.

Out of the 16 metal objects found in the hoard, three are mere gilt copper fragments, two are cast bell and 11 repoussé, nearly all round in shape. The most remarkable was a rectangular 27 cm gilt copper repoussé work depicting an image of Ardhanārīśvara of śiva-Pāvatī containing a damaged 9-line inscription at the top (see p. 208 for a roman transliteration, English translation and Appendix Fig. 2 for an orthographic reconstruction of its text). A gilded copper finial *(suvarnarasita tāmraprasthka)* from Pinrā, north of Phanapingu-*viṣaya*, contains a far-better preserved inscription. As all repoussé images have two to four or more holes, evidently they are *devamūrttis* (a term used in the inscribed text itelf) intended for carrying in portable temples for local festivities, firmly nailed or tied with strings to a wooden board or timbre. In the 74-page-long paper Slusser discusses neither the function nor the iconography of the images. Misled by her informants, she believes that the dates are NS 140 and NS 185. However, the first letter numeral in both the inscriptions is not 'a' (equivalent to 100) but 'ka' (equivalent to 400). So the pieces are three centuries later in time. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that there was no paramount ruler named Arjunadeva ruling in Tistung, Pharping, nor the Kathmandu Valley in AD 1020 or 1068 whereas Arjnadeva/Jayārjunadeva was alive till AD 1382 in Bhaktapur Kvāchem̤, though not politically kicking. The paleographic competence of Slusser's scholarly collaborators can be assessed by reviewing the gross inconsistencies among the roman transliteration, the English translation, and above all the 'reconstruction' of the Ardhanārīśvara repoussé inscription!

Though brief, a striking contrast to the above is Slusser's early 'musings' on the splendours of 'riot in woodwork', particularly Nepali wood brackets. Although several scholars have cursorily dealt with it, by the mid-1970s a few drew attention to the aesthetic merits of a group of the early 12-13th-century brackets depicting the *yakṣi/sālabhaújikā* theme that goes back to the early centuries in Indian art history. Even a scholar of Tucci's eminence was enamored more of the erotica of the late brackets inspired by esoteric religious iconography than by this group

of exquisite woodwork. The nine sensuous and enchanting *Yakṣis* from Uku Bāhā, three from Itum Bāhā, four from Yatkhā Bāhā, and several from Tvāya Bahā, seven from Tyāgal tole and 51 brackets from Panauti Indreśvara temple comprise an earliest corpus, exhibiting 'a spontaneous rhythm'. Nearly all have 'firm breasts, delicate waists, ample hips, and swelling thighs'. However, the later ones were of lesser aesthetic merit, though Slussser's judgment that they were the output of an emerging trend 'on the route leading to the decadence of the later tradition' (p. 129) sounds too harsh. She deeply laments the decline of the Newar Buddhist institutions which could no longer sustain the annual exhibits of the precious art treasures in their monasteries. In 1974, these exhibits were already 'a thing of the past' as a result of rising pace of art theft and transactions encouraged by mafias using national as well as international networking. Her elegiac postscript (p. 130) on the later 'dispersal' of these pieces of treasures, once worshipped by people, in the art market and finally in well-endowed museums in the USA strikes a familiar note. Now, there is already a sizeable volume of literature on stolen art from Nepal.

Painting

Slusser, not unlike a traditional *gurmā*, sitting amidst credulous devotees or a tourist party comes to her full swing and eloquence when she discusses a painting, a tattered God-forsaken fragment though it may be. It does not seem to matter so much what it depicts or how accomplished it is as a work of art: the fact that it is dated and, above all, in the Cleveland Museum of Art donated by a munificent donor seems to her a self-evident reason to wax eloquently on its 'narrative content'. The alleged *Svayambhū Purāṇa* (as Slusser unsuccessfully interprets) or a *Tītha Mahātmya* (as Stella Kramrisch claimed) is a *bilaṃpau*, a *paṭacitra* depicting various holy spots, river-confluences and shrines in the Kathmandu Valley—both Buddhist and Hindu, sanctified by gods and sages without any sectarian persuasion. Register A depicts Dvādaśa *tīrthas* and Aṣṭavītarāgas, the eight śiva *liṅgas* reinterpreted as Eight Passionless Beings in local Buddhist lore whereas register B is the legend of śāntikara and his rain-making nāgaśadhanā. The 36 extant frames barely fall into any 'narrative intent'. Each frame is an individual vignette, barely related to what goes before or comes after, much less to the whole. If the extant painting has any thematic unity, it may be the

quest for rains which ultimately feed the few rivers of the valley. Unfortunately, Slusser wastes all her time and analytical energy recapitulating the milestones of the legend than discussing the art piece. Though she claims that it is of 'profound interest' (p. 259), there is more about the Svayambhū monument complex and Pratāp Malla's magical (mis)adventures than about the merits or demerits of the painting and its style and technique. The black-and-white plates are nearly useless and the colour reproduction barely useful.

Slusser's discussion of the 16th-century I-bahil 'Pilgrim's Guide' Painting dated NS 685 ṣāḍha 10 Sunday (equivalent to AD 1565 July 10?) is interesting as it vindicates the Western art specialists' and collectors' care and love against native ignorance and deplorable neglect, 'the painting when last displayed in the *vihāra* was, like the monastery itself, in a deplorable state. Framed by crudely stitched, coarse white cotton perhaps provided by the pair of pious eighteenth-century donors shown in the appliquéd cartouche below, the painting was dirty, crumpled, and torn...liberally spattered with red and yellow colours flicked at it during worship, and everywhere the paint, chalky from damp, was flaking away, taking with it precious inscription' (p.291).

The history of this painting since August 1967, the last date of its public display, is exciting on its own. It was bought by A. Peter Burleigh, a well-intentioned American diplomat posted in Kathmandu in the 1960s. He has 'bequeathed' it to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, USA. This, in part, is how most Nepali art ended up in 'dispersal'—to use Slusser's harmless term *because of* their 'deplorable' treatment in Nepali hands! How it survived for four full centuries before the arrival of Western art lovers and art specialists in the late 1960s is still a mystery. The intensity of this 'art care and love affair' began so fast that by 1989, when Jurgen Schick and Lain S. Bangdel independently studied and published on the art-(up)lifting industry in Nepal, some 180 solid sculptures weighing tons had left Nepal, albeit by diplomatic routes, presumably swimming in petrol tanks of overland vehicles!

Slusser goes into great detail while discussing the pictorial pilgrim's guide to the sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley. She finds it 'a striking composition, coherent, wonderfully coloured, and eminently satisfying esthetically...conceptualizing and giving form to complex notions in an undeniably spectacular composition' (p. 310). Unlike the previous paper, stylistic points of interest in art history are discussed

systematically though 'in his naivete the painter is quite undaunted by laws of perspective or gravity'. Most objects, people, places, flora, fauna are symbolic rather than 'naturalistic'. Yet she finds it 'eminently instructive in matters of art history, geography, social and religious practices' which makes it a unique piece.

The volume is enriched by three minor papers on painting though they are not strictly by Nepalese nor are they from Nepal. One is an 18th-century penwork, or *kalamkāri* scroll, an imported piece seven metres in length and a metre and a half in width, brilliantly painted sometime between AD 1750 and 1800, probably commissioned by the court, depicting the Navadurgās on textile using mordants and dyes in complex processes of fibre penetration and colourfastness evolved by Indian craftsmen over millennia. Its lamentable condition touched many a soft heart before it was ultimately 'rescued from its ignominy when it was hawked about in the USA'. It is now purchased by persons devoted to the arts and culture of Nepal for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Slusser narrates this sad tale on page 367 with no small relish or sense of achievement at this 'relief and conservation programme of great delicacy and heavy investment'. As Slusser draws our attention to this banner and its 12 by 15 centimetre repair patch appliquéd at its bottom, she concludes that much of its design elements are from the Mughal repertoire. Since there are 'at least two other surviving specimens still in use in the Kathmandu Valley', one at Harisiddhi *Jala pyākham* and another at the Brahmāyaṇī shrine in Bhaktapur we have some lingering hope to continue to see and enjoy this art form in Nepal.

'A Document on Himalayan Painting' illustrates yet again how flotsams and jetsams of artefact, disconnected with one another, land in high places of art in the West en route tourist markets. One of the painted wooden covers contains a couple of Buddhist mantras in Raújanā script 'written in an unscholarly manner' (p. 389, footnote 2). Slusser has an astonishing ability to weave a lengthy paper out of nearly anything so that she talks at length about this 'document on Himalayan Painting' even though it merely consists of a numbered folio of some 'unidentified canonical Tibetan Buddhist text' written on *nīlapatra* and two covers with Buddhist sketches and paintings in Kar ma sGa bris style (see Colour plates X and XI), presumably the work of a Newar artist commissioned by a Tibetan patron in the 17th or 19th century. This, coupled with the evidence of sketch-books prepared by his Tibetan

associate for Jīvarāma in AD 1652/3, leads her to conclude that 'paintings that are now labeled "Tibetan" may actually only be "Tibetan style" produced in fact by a Newar, even one working in Nepal' (p. 397).

The final paper is all the more exceptionally rich as it discusses the identity, form, substance and symbolism of a small John Gellatly bequest to the Smithsonian Institution, depicting the so-called red and green Spice Goddesses painted on two sides 34.1 cm high, made of round sewn paper as a silk fan with a handle. The inscription in Tibetan reads, 'You who bring down a rain of divine incense powder, you hold various sorts of incense powder. May you worship with a shower of incense powder pervading all clothing, ornaments, and coiffures.' The paintings are probably from central Tibet in the 15th-century Bal bris or Sakya style, i.e., Tibetan painting in Nepali tradition—a style too common then as 'there was no convent which at the moment of its foundation or of its greatest prosperity, was not embellished by (Newar artists) with statues or frescoes'.[1]

Architecture and Minor Arts

Slusser is at the height of her analytical and interpretative powers in the papers which discuss some mediaeval architectural monuments. She succeeds in bringing all available resources, including the best in her collaborators, in order to muster all published sources in Western languages as well as in Sanskrit, Nepali, Newari and other non-Western languages. The central premise of her approach to Nepali architecture is that its model, motifs and ground-plan are classical Indian, going as far back as the Vedic *maṇḍapa* or *sabhā* assembly-halls so often referred to in literary sources. The columns, the pilasters, the flora and fauna decorating these are all *in origins* Kushana or Gupta. She hopes to reconstruct the Licchavi religious as well as secular architecture by assembling the abandoned columns in stone or by analysing the decorative motifs and arches carved on extant Lichhavi and transitional (pre-Malla period) stone *āvaraṇas* and *caityas*. In her optimism, she firmly believes that 'the structures which embellish the Valley today are clearly not of local inspiration. They represent end points in a long tradition whose sources lie elsewhere' (p. 581).

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1 Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Vol I, p. 333, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Roma.

Launching from this convenient post, the rest of her exploratory journey in the Valley becomes a matter of prosaic 'ferreting the sources' documenting, for example, when the Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa was built, who built it, who lived there until recently. The puzzling question is why was it even built? Nobody builds such an unwieldy structure for fun. Unfortunately, the extant sources are unrelenting and ambiguous at best. We do not know for sure whether it *was* a public hall, a shopping mall, or a coronation stage. The first documented use of its name in AD 1143 is grossly cryptic. The alleged Gorakhanātha stone sculpture placed at the central hall with no visible ritual role in the surrounding community may be a later embellishment. As Tibetan sources claim, it may rather be of Padmasambhava who is said to have preached there. At least, the Buddhist community of Tāmrākārs use it for alms-giving on *Paúcadāna*. It may, on the other hand, be the public hall where a King of Upper Kathmandu receives his sceptre every twelve years from Pacali/Paúcaliṅga/Bhairava, symbolically representing the people of the settlements of Dakṣinakoligrāma (the southern village of the oilpressers). They shout on a given day that salt and oil are yet 'sold at different prices' so that Lord Luipāda, the benefactor, should continue to be in the Valley for its continued prosperity.

However, Gorakhanātha as such is *not* mentioned in the copperplate, as Slusser claims (p. 451). If we peel off the multiplicity of functions and rituals connected with the Kāṣṭhamaṇḍapa it clearly is neither a *pāṭi*, nor a pilgrim's rest-house, certainly not a *dharmaśāla*. The centrality of its location near the ancient royal place complex at Gun-po or Hiti chowk is all the more puzzling. Colonel Kirkpatick's facile remark, equating it with 'wooden Mundubs occasionally met with in other parts of India', which Slusser quotes approvingly (p. 461), is thus at best misleading. If one analyses the earliest dated copperplate, dated NS 454, attached to this building, it was in origin an assembly hall dedicated to Pacali Bhairava, the tutelary deity of the then-ruling consortium of eight houses of Mahāpātras of Kathmandu. 'Pacali Bharārha' is the deity the three feudatories of lower Kathmandu mentioned as the 'witnesss' in the copperplate stipulating the principal article of their agreement *(thiti)* to boycott, or not to follow, the cult of Jugi (Yogi) Samarāgi, evidently a proponent of the Nātha sect. Thus, there appears to have been a patronage conflict and an emerging cultural tension between the Nātha cult followed by the reigning or contending House of the Mallas and the Paúcaliṅga

Bhairava cult followed by the ruling Mahāpātras. Once the grip on political power of the feudatories weakened, the later copperplates granted by Yakṣamalla handed over the building to the Kāpālikas, relegating the symbolic presence of Pacali Bharava to a nearby Bhūtaśāla!

Often, availability of documents becomes a liability than an asset for Slusser when they make room for multiple interpretations like the AD 1379 copperplate of Sthitirājamalla, a problem aggravated by 'the difficulty of reading the original, a blackened and warped plaque nailed high in an almost inaccessible place' (p. 451, note 60). Recently, a learned Vajracharya published a Newari monograph claiming that Luipā was none other than Lilāvajra, the preceptor-founder of Shikhoṃmū Mahāvihāra!

The two other monuments Slusser analyses are less problematic, particularly the 13th-century Indreśvara Mahādeva temple at the village of Panauti. This is so because as she says, 'architecturally, the shrine is disappointing, being somewhat ungainly and severe. But by virtue of the remarkable woodcarvings it incorporates, the temple ranks among the foremost art treasures of Nepal' (p. 505). The temple contains 12 corner brackets, four *śārdūlas* support the top roof; four griffons the middle one, and two *śārdūlas* and two griffons the lower one. The remaining 40 brackets conform to a general design: each is composed of a major figure, a deity, a demigod or an epic hero/heroine canopied by foliage, borne by a pair of caryatids, mainly a pair making love, ensconsed in a symbolic rocky setting. Paying glowing compliments to their merit, Slusser speculates that the stone carvers of yore had largely abandoned their traditional medium to work in wood. 'The architectural arts of the Licchavis, known principally from stone surface debris, is faithfully reflected in wood' (p. 520, note 42). 'It is in the extraordinary sumptuous treatment of dress and coiffure, attributes and ornaments of the principal bracket images that the master carvers of Panauti perhaps best reveal their virtuosity' (p. 515). Among the main brackets, those of Rāma, Yudhiṣṭhira, Hanūmān, Arjuna and Yakṣīs are outstanding ones, indeed. An elaborate analysis of other aesthetic merits of the carvings is provided on pp. 516-517, substantiating her claim that the mediaeval wood carvings are 'profoundly infused with the ghosts of the Licchavi stone carvers' (p. 519).

Fortunately, the ghosts of Licchavi stone carvers were not invoked yet again in dealing with another monument, the terracotta temple of

Mahābaudha at Patan partly because there was no such model in Licchavi Nepal, but mainly because it was avowedly an imitation in terracotta of the one in Bodhagayā where Siddhārtha, the historical Buddha, attained enlightenment. Its foundation was laid in AD 1564 by Abhayarāja śākya who designed it, but it was completed 46 years later by his descendants in AD 1610. Though a vaguely reminiscent imitation, it has a number of unique modified architectural features which do not go with the śikhara style—e.g., the toraṇa. It is 'an outstanding example of the little known art of terracotta in Nepal and of Nepalization of arts that have come to it from elsewhere' (p. 597). Though the paper purports to deal with architecture, briefly analysed on pp. 596-599, it unfortunately drifts, from the teeming wealth of terracotta imagery, to subsidiary topics of the Māravijaya theme in Nepal's Buddhist sculpture and painting, to a cursory discussion of an 18th-century toraṇa and a 16th-century *paubhā*. The 'mixed nature of the paper' is reinforced by additional paragraphs, 'far beyond the scope of this paper' dealing with *caturmukha caityas* in Bodhagayā and Nepal!

The astonishing catholicity of Slusser's love for and interest in the *objets d'art* from the Kathmandu Valley is nowhere better exemplified than in her charming paper on what she calls 'inkwells' or the *śiyāhidāna* as the Mughals called these portable ink containers, resembling the Chinese snuff-bottle in size or the Buddhist-Hindu *pūrṇakalaśa* in shape. She draws our attention to hitherto-neglected artistic but secular, utilitarian, ethnographic items of day-to-day use such as oil-lamps, water vessels, spinning wheels etc, because 'these utilitarian objects issued from the same Kathmandu Valley workshops that produced the splendid images of the gods' 'created by the selfsame hands and minds that fashioned what we now choose to categorize as art' (p. 627). The inkwell as well as the metal pencase has its origins in Mughal India though many a decorative motifs they contain are a part of timeless Buddhist-Hindu symbolism of life, fertility and well-being. As these inkpots are exquisitely decorated with designs of dragons, *makaras, kinnaras, nāgas, śārdūlas,* personified river goddesses, vegetation, sea-waves, they are indeed a microcosm of the culture of Nepal. Slusser goes further, 'the pair of *kinnaras* with enormous convoluted, foliate tails depicted on one vessel seem almost to have been copied from a seventh century stone relief that once embellished a temple in Kathmandu—a relief that in turn draws its inspiration from more ancient Gupta India' (p. 632, Fig. 5 and Fig. 28).

For those who are interested *and* have patience to read it through the collection of Slusser's 17 papers, published and scattered in a number of not-too-easily accessible art journals is most welcome, especially because it is launched on the initiative of a Nepali publishing house. The book contains hundreds of black-and-white plates, maps, drawings as well as colour plates—mostly Slusser's own. As she can make any object both a worthy theme and an infatuation, reading her may turn out to be an addiction, enriched by her flamboyant prose studded with meticulous documentation of all sources on Nepali art accessible to her or her collaborators.

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Lienhard's Last Publication: *Mythe du Népal*

Svayambhūpurāṇa: Mythe du Népal by Siegfried Lienhard; Editions Findakley, Paris, 2009; ISBN 978-2-86 805-142 4; pp. 80; 28 Euros. Roman Transliteration, translation, commentary and analysis in French of a Nepali painting from the Hodgson Collection, now in the Asian Collection of Musee Guimet, Paris.

The book deals with a painting from Nepal, originally owned by British Resident Brian Hodgson, now in the Asian collection of the Musée Guimet, Paris. Two metres and 15 centimetres long, one metre and 85 centimetres wide, it consists of 85 frames divided horizontally into six registers. Each frame contains a numbered Sanskrit text along the bottom white margin, explaining the scene and its significance. It was also reproduced in a black-and-white plate by Sylvain Lévi in *Le Népal* (Vol I, 1905) as an Annexe under the title 'Sacred Legend du Nepal'. In Vol III (1908), pp. 173-178 of the book, Lévi gives a translation in French of each frame-text, based on a Hindustani rendering supplied to him. The painting was also briefly discussed by Alfred Foucher who thought that it might be of 'archaeological relevance'.

In the last three decades, Lienhard had published three studies on Newar paintings—the Viśvantara- jātaka painting (1980), the Simhala-sārthavāha bilampau (1985), and the Krishna līlā painting from the Patan Museum (1995). Unlike the first two, the Patan painting is a *citra kāvya*, thus combining all four strands of Lienhard's deep scholarly interests—poetry, painting, religion and Newar culture.

The Musée Guimet painting was personally commissioned by an inquisitive Westerner, Brian Hodgson, stationed in Kathmandu as Resident of the British court in 1823-1844. It may be a work of Raja Man Chitrakar of Kathmandu, Maru tole, as he did most of architectural sketches and paintings of rare flora and fauna, especially the birds in the Hodgson Collection, now in the British Library. The painting has clear family resemblance with the fresco on the same theme painted in the 19th century on the inner walls of the Shāntipur shrine at Svayambhū complex. In the 1980s, the fresco was restored carefully by a team of Western technicians. Sadly, however, its present condition shows the perils of incense burning and the gradual accumulation of a patina of black oily sooth. The fresco was painted to commemorate the *bhīmaratārohaṇa* the *jaṃko* ceremony of a chitrakar from lower part of Kathmandu.

The book is given the title *Syayambhūpurāṇa* as well as the sub-title of *Maṇicūdāvadāna*. In some longer versions with 10 or 12 chapters, the *avadāna* of Maṇicūda, the glorification of Eight Passionless beings, the 12 *tīrthas* and eight *smaśāna* are incorporated into the *purāṇa* of the Svayambhū complex. The painting is, however, about neither in totality. Thematically, it lacks unity of plot, character, narrative and design. There seem to be several sub-texts, including the *mahātmya* of 12 *tīrthas* and eight burning ghāts. In fact, the initial few frames and final parts alone pertain to the Svayambhū mahācaitya, its origins and subsequent construction by Shāntikara āchārya and King Guṇakāmadeva. All along the middle, the pictorial narrative drifts and lurches right and left picking different strands on the way. So, the title of the painting is loose at best. The *jyotirūpa* is, of course, the holiest spot of sacred geography.

Register 1 containing frames 1-16 deals with the legendary history of the Nepal Valley. In Register 2 the legendary history is continued from frame 17 to 25. Frames 26-34 deal with the legend of Prince Maṇicūḍa. The narrative continues in Register 3, but the numbers on the frames are confusing as 54, 55, 56 and 57 are used for 34, 35, 36 and 37. Frames 50, 51, 52 and 53 do not appear to be a part of the story of Maṇicūḍa. Register 4 concludes the legend, but the numbers and sequence are disorderly. Register 5 contains the glorification of 12 tīrthas and the eight vītarāgas. The legendary history of the Svayambhū mahācaitya is picked up in Register 6 and after enumerating eight burning ghats, the legend of Karkoṭaka nāga, Shāntikara and King Guṇakāmadeva is crammed into the remaining frames.

Although the painting teems with details and is virtually a riot of bright colours, stylistically in the painter's pallet there is a predominance of red and blue at the cost of other primary colours such as yellow or even green. There is a predominance of stereotypes, profiles, with no modelling nor any perspective, depth and distance in space. The narrative moves slow, if it does, from frame to frame. In painting the physical backdrop of the story, the composition, particularly its vegetation, animals, landscape, monuments and buildings, is clearly under the influence of divergent late-Indian styles, resulting in a exotic blend of Rajasthani-Pahari flourishes.

Lienhard, unexpectedly, devotes a disproportionate attention (more than six pages) to the journey of the painting from Nepal, or from the Hodgson Collection to France, and finally to the Musée Guimet. But of a total number of limited pages devoted to analysis, nearly all are allocated to transliteration and translation of this narrative. There is precious little on the technique or the intrinsic or aesthetic merits of the painting. Where does it stand in comparison with other paintings on the similar theme, or the same genre, discussed by art historians Stella Kramarish or Mary Slusser, Theodore Riccardi, Jr, Anne Vergatti or the ones Lienhard himself had brilliantly investigated in the past? A discussion of the aesthetic merit or cultural import of the painting would have enhanced Lienhard's labour. This lacuna may be due to the fact that when the publication was released on September 26, 2009, Lienhard was in and out of hospital with heart problems. He was stepping at 86 when it was complete. His powers of critical analysis, so acute in earlier works on *bilampau* or *citra-kāvya*, may have faltered into discussion of bureaucratic details on the French ownership of this painting by a Newar chitrakar done at the behest of an English diplomat!

Evidently, the painting is done with an intention of impressing the pilgrim on the power of the place by investing the cultural geography of the Kathmandu Valley, particularly its shrines, rivers, hillocks and ghāts with cultural import drawn from Hindu-Buddhist traditions. To classify a confluence of rivulets or a cremation place as Buddhist or Hindu, is just as senseless as to glorify a slab of stone as Lokanātha or Lokapāla.

There is no dearth of evidence in this painting to believe that the painter was overwhelmed by the theme he had chosen. He is confused many a time, and this is evident in the discrepancies between the textual matter and the pictorial frame. The mistaken sequence of numbers in the texts

too betrays this hard fact. The painter is certainly lost in the jungle of different narrative strands, leaving the final impression that he came to realise, at the end of the day, that the work was about the mahācaitya of Svayambhū indeed. Thus, he piles up the remaining strands of the narrative on the last few frames!

The painting is a *pata-citra-kathā*, a *paudhā*, not a *bilampau* or long narratve scroll painting. Lienhard analyses *bilampau* as a compound from *vilamba patra*, a picture to be seen patiently. This etymological analysis is arguable. *Bi* is a serpent, *lam* is path, and *pau* is *pati/prati*. *Bi-lam-pau* may thus mean 'a long winding picture'.

The text is in *nāgari* characters in black ink on a white band. It is in Hybrid Sanskrit, a corrupt form of Sanskrit not too far from the text of the late copy of the *Vṛhat Svayambhūpurāṇa* edited by Haraprasad Shastri in 1903. Because of this linguistic deviance, Lévi resorted to a Hindustani version of it. At a number of places Lienhard departs from Lévi. However, both seem to rely on intuition and at times conjectures based on the picture rather than on the given texts.

To have worked so diligently in the mid-80s on this painting is in itself a testimony to Lienhard's long love affair with the religion and language of Nepāla-maṇḍala, of which it was a pious pictorial representation of mythic history.

Kamal P. Malla retired as Professor of English from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. He received his early education in Nepal and completed his further studies in the United Kingdom, earning a PhD in English Linguistics from the University of Edinburgh in 1974. Between 1977 and 1979, he served as the Rector of Tribhuvan University, and in 1980-1982 led the Linguistic Society of Nepal as its Founding President. He has been a Visiting Scholar at the Scandinavian Institute for Asian Studies and at the University of California, Berkeley. Among his major publications are *A Dictionary of Classical Newari* (1989, Chief Editor), which was awarded the Nikkie Asia Award for Culture in 2001; *Nepal: Perspectives on Continuity and Change* (1989, Editor); *The Gopalarajavamsavali: A Facsimile Edition* (1984, Co-editor); *The Road to Nowhere: A Selection of Writings* (1978, reprinted 2015); and *Nepal in Perspective* (1973, Co-editor).

Spanning a period of over 40 years, this collection of essays serves to portray the intellectual depth and evolution of renowned Nepali scholar Kamal P. Malla. Beginning his career as a teacher of linguistics, Professor Malla ventured into the field of cultural history and eventually also engaged with the latter-day concerns of identity politics. Delving into subjects as varied as the state of English education in Nepal to the history of mediaeval Nepal, his writings included in this book provide a window into the concerns of Kathmandu's small but intensely engaged academia of the 1970s and the 80s. This collection of essays re-introduces the reader to the prolific and diverse output of one of Nepal's best-read scholars and finest minds of the second half of the 20th century who was also one never to shirk from expressing his innermost beliefs. A public intellectual with both wide learning and a willingness to speak out, Professor Malla's writings will educate us far into the future.

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